

CHARLES BUKOWSKI
Love Is a Dog from Hell
Poems, 1974-1977

Dedication

to Carl Weissner

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1
one more creature
dizzy with love

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Sandra

1 is the slim tall
2 ear-ringed
3 bedroom damsel
4 dressed in a long
5 gown

6 she's always high
7 in heels
8 spirit
9 pills
10 booze

11 Sandra leans out of
12 her chair
13 leans toward
14 Glendale

15 I wait for her head
16 to hit the closet
17 doorknob
18 as she attempts to
19 light
20 a new cigarette on an
21 almost burnt-out
22 one

23 at 32 she likes
24 young neat
25 unscratched boys
26 with faces like the bottoms
27 of new saucers

28 she has proclaimed as much
29 to me
30 has brought her prizes

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31 over for me to view:
32 silent blonde zeros of young
33 flesh
34 who

35 a) sit
36 b) stand
37 c) talk
38 at her command

39 sometimes she brings one
40 sometimes two
41 sometimes three
42 for me to
43 view

44 Sandra looks very good in
45 long gowns
46 Sandra could probably break
47 a man's heart

48 I hope she finds
49 one.

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you

1 you're a beast, she said
2 your big white belly
3 and those hairy feet.
4 you never cut your nails
5 and you have fat hands
6 paws like a cat
7 your bright red nose
8 and the biggest balls
9 I've ever seen.
10 you shoot sperm like a
11 whale shoots water out of the
12 hole in its back.

13 beast beast beast,
14 she kissed me,
15 what do you want for
16 breakfast?

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the 6 foot goddess

1 I'm big
2 I suppose that's why my women always seem
3 small
4 but this 6 foot goddess
5 who deals in real estate
6 and art
7 and flies from Texas
8 to see me
9 and I fly to Texas
10 to see her---
11 well, there's plenty of her to
12 grab hold of
13 and I grab hold of it
14 of her,
15 I yank her head back by the hair,

16 I'm real macho,
17 I suck on her upper lip
18 her cunt
19 her soul
20 I mount her and tell her,
21 "I'm going to shoot white hot
22 juice into you. I didn't fly all the
23 way to Galveston to play
24 chess."

25 later we lay locked like human vines
26 my left arm under her pillow
27 my right arm over her side
28 I grip both of her hands,
29 and my chest
30 belly
31 balls
32 cock
33 tangle into her
34 and through us

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35 in the dark
36 pass rays
37 back and forth
38 back and forth
39 until I fall away
40 and we sleep.

41 she's wild
42 but kind
43 my 6 foot goddess
44 makes me laugh
45 the laughter of the mutilated
46 who still need
47 love,
48 and her blessed eyes
49 run deep into her head
50 like mountain springs
51 far in
52 and
53 cool and good.

54 she has saved me
55 from everything that is
56 not here.

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I've seen too many glazed-eyed bums sitting under a bridge
drinking cheap wine

1 you sit on the couch
2 with me
3 tonight
4 new woman.

5 have you seen the
6 animal-eater

7 documentaries?

8 they show death.

9 and now I wonder
10 which animal of
11 us will eat the
12 other first
13 physically and
14 last
15 spiritually?

16 we consume animals
17 and then one of us
18 consumes the other,
19 my love.

20 meanwhile
21 I'd prefer you go
22 first the first way

23 since if past performance
24 charts mean anything
25 I'll surely go
26 first the last
27 way.

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sexpot

1 "you know," she said, "you were at
2 the bar so you didn't see
3 but I danced with this guy.
4 we danced and we danced
5 close.
6 but I didn't go home with him
7 because he knew I was with
8 you."

9 "thanks a bunch," I
10 said.

11 she was always thinking of sex.
12 she carried it around with her
13 like something in a paper
14 bag.
15 such energy.
16 she never forgot.
17 she stared at every man available
18 in morning cafes
19 over bacon and eggs
20 or later
21 over a noon sandwich or
22 a steak dinner.

23 "I've modeled myself after
24 Marilyn Monroe," she told
25 me.

26 "she's always running off
27 to some local disco to dance
28 with a baboon," a friend once told
29 me, "I'm amazed that you've
30 stood for it as long as you have."

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31 she'd vanish at racetracks
32 then come back and say,
33 "three men offered to buy me
34 a drink."

35 or I'd lose her in the parking
36 lot and I'd look up and she'd
37 be walking along with a strange man.
38 "well, he came from this direction
39 and I came from that and we
40 kind of walked together. I
41 didn't want to hurt his
42 feelings."

43 she said that I was a very
44 jealous man.

45 one day she just
46 fell down
47 inside of her sexual organs
48 and vanished.

49 it was like an alarm clock
50 dropping into the
51 Grand Canyon.
52 it banged and rattled and
53 rang and rang
54 but I could no longer
55 see or hear it.

56 I'm feeling much better
57 now.
58 I've taken up tap-dancing
59 and I wear a black felt
60 hat pulled down low
61 over my right
62 eye.

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sweet music

1 it beats love because there aren't any
2 wounds: in the morning
3 she turns on the radio, Brahms or Ives
4 or Stravinsky or Mozart. she boils the
5 eggs counting the seconds out loud: 56,
6 57, 58 ... she peels the eggs, brings
7 them to me in bed. after breakfast it's
8 the same chair and listen to the class-
9 ical music. she's on her first glass of
10 scotch and her third cigarette. I tell

11 her I must go to the racetrack. she's
12 been here about 2 nights and 2 days. "when
13 will I see you again?" I ask. she
14 suggests that might be up to me. I
15 nod and Mozart plays.

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numb your ass and your brain and your heart---

1 I was coming off an affair that had gone badly.
2 frankly, I was sliding down into a pit
3 really feeling shitty and low
4 when I lucked into this lady with a large bed
5 covered with a jeweled canopy
6 plus
7 wine, champagne, smokes, pills and
8 color tv.
9 we stayed in bed and
10 drank wine, champagne, smoked, popped pills
11 by the dozens
12 as I (feeling shitty and low)
13 tried to get over this affair that had gone
14 bad.
15 I watched the tv trying to dull my senses,
16 but the thing that really helped
17 was this very long
18 (specially written for tv) drama about
19 spies---
20 American spies and Russian spies, and
21 they were all so clever and
22 cool---
23 even their children didn't know
24 their wives didn't know, and
25 in a way
26 they hardly knew---
27 and I found out about counter-spies, double-spies:
28 guys who worked both sides, and
29 then this one who was a double-spy turned
30 into a triple-spy, it
31 got nicely confusing---
32 I don't even think the guy who wrote the script
33 knew what was happening---
34 it went on for hours!

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35 seaplanes rammed into icebergs,
36 a priest in Madison, Wisc. murdered his brother,
37 a block of ice was shipped in a casket to Peru
38 in lieu of the world's largest diamond, and
39 blondes walked in and out of rooms eating
40 creampuffs and walnuts;
41 the triple-spy turned into a
42 quadruple-spy and everybody loved
43 everybody
44 and it went on and on
45 and the hours passed and
46 it all finally vanished like a paperclip in a
47 bag of trash and I

48 reached over and flicked off the set and
49 slept well for the first time
50 in a week and a half.

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one of the hottest

1 she wore a platinum blond wig
2 and her face was rouged and powdered
3 and she put the lipstick on
4 making a huge painted mouth
5 and her neck was wrinkled
6 but she still had the ass of a young girl
7 and the legs were good.
8 she wore blue panties and I got them off
9 raised her dress, and with the TV flickering
10 I took her standing up.
11 as we struggled around the room
12 (I'm fucking the grave, I thought, I'm
13 bringing the dead back to life, marvelous
14 so marvelous
15 like eating cold olives at 3 a.m.
16 with half the town on fire)
17 I came.

18 you boys can keep your virgins
19 give me hot old women in high heels
20 with asses that forgot to get old.

21 of course, you leave afterwards
22 or get very drunk
23 which is the same
24 thing.

25 we drank wine for hours and watched tv
26 and when we went to bed
27 to sleep it off
28 she left her teeth in all
29 night long.

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ashes

1 I got his ashes, she said, and I took them
2 out to sea and I scattered his ashes and
3 they didn't even look like ashes
4 and
5 the urn was weighted with
6 green and blue pebbles ...

7 he didn't leave you any of his
8 millions?

9 nothing, she said.

10 after having to eat all those breakfasts
11 and lunches and dinners with him? after
12 listening to all his bullshit?

13 he was a brilliant man.
14 you know what I mean.
15 anyhow, I got the ashes. and you fucked
16 my sisters.
17 I never fucked your sisters.
18 yes, you did.
19 I fucked one of them.
20 which one?
21 the lesbian, I said, she bought me dinner and drinks,
22 I had very little choice.
23 I'm going, she said.

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24 don't forget your bottle.
25 she went in and got it.
26 there's so little to you, she said, that when you die
and
27 they burn you they'll have to add almost all green and
28 blue pebbles.
29 all right, I said.
30 I'll see you in 6 months! she screamed and slammed the
door.
31 well, I thought, I guess in order to get rid of her
I'll have
32 to fuck her other sister. I walked into the bedroom
and started
33 looking for phone numbers. all I remembered was that
she
34 lived in San Mateo and had a very good
35 job.

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fuck

1 she pulled her dress off
2 over her head
3 and I saw the panties
4 indented somewhat into the
5 crotch.
6 it's only human.
7 now we've got to do it.
8 I've got to do it

9 after all that bluff.
10 it's like a party---
11 two trapped
12 idiots.

13 under the sheets
14 after I have snapped
15 off the light
16 her panties are still
17 on. she expects an
18 opening performance.
19 I can't blame her. but
20 wonder why she's here with
21 me? where are the other
22 guys? how can you be
23 lucky? having someone the
24 others have abandoned?

25 we didn't have to do it
26 yet we had to do it.
27 it was something like
28 establishing new credibility
29 with the income tax
30 man. I get the panties
31 off. I decide not to
32 tongue her. even then

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33 I'm thinking about
34 after it's over.

35 we'll sleep together
36 tonight
37 trying to fit ourselves
38 inside the wallpaper.

39 I try, fail,
40 notice the hair on her
41 head
42 mostly notice the hair
43 on her
44 head
45 and a glimpse of
46 nostrils
47 piglike

48 I try it
49 again.

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me

1 women don't know how to love,
2 she told me.
3 you know how to love
4 but women just want to
5 leech.
6 I know this because I'm a

7 woman.
8 hahaha, I laughed.
9 so don't worry about your breakup
10 with Susan
11 because she'll just leech onto
12 somebody else.
13 we talked a while longer
14 then I said goodbye
15 hungup
16 went into the crapper and
17 took a good beershit
18 mainly thinking, well,
19 I'm still alive
20 and have the ability to expell
21 wastes from my body.
22 and poems.
23 and as long as that's happening
24 I have the ability to handle
25 betrayal
26 loneliness
27 hangnail
28 clap
29 and the economic reports in the
30 financial section.
31 with that

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32 I stood up
33 wiped
34 flushed
35 then thought:
36 it's true:
37 I know how to
38 love.
39 I pulled up my pants and walked
40 into the other room.

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another bed
1 another bed
2 another woman
3 more curtains
4 another bathroom
5 another kitchen
6 other eyes
7 other hair
8 other
9 feet and toes.
10 everybody's looking.

11 the eternal search.
12 you stay in bed
13 she gets dressed for work
14 and you wonder what happened
15 to the last one
16 and the one before that ...
17 it's all so comfortable---
18 this love-making
19 this sleeping together
20 the gentle kindness ...
21 after she leaves you get up and use her
22 bathroom,
23 it's all so intimate and so strange.
24 you go back to bed and
25 sleep another hour.
26 when you leave it's with sadness
27 but you'll see her again
28 whether it works or not.

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29 you drive down to the shore and sit
30 in your car. it's almost noon.
31 ---another bed, other ears, other
32 ear rings, other mouths, other slippers, other
33 dresses
34 colors, doors, phone numbers.
35 you were once strong enough to live alone.
36 for a man nearing sixty you should be more
37 sensible.
38 you start the car and shift,
39 thinking, I'll phone Jeanie when I get in,
40 I haven't seen her since Friday.

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trapped

1 don't undress my love
2 you might find a mannequin;
3 don't undress the mannequin
4 you might find
5 my love.
6 she's long ago
7 forgotten me.
8 she's trying on a new
9 hat
10 and looks more the
11 coquette
12 than ever.
13 she is a

14 child
15 and a mannequin
16 and
17 death.

18 I can't hate
19 that.

20 she didn't do
21 anything
22 unusual.

23 I only wanted her
24 to.

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tonight

1 "your poems about the girls will still be around
2 50 years from now when the girls are gone,"
3 my editor phones me.

4 dear editor:
5 the girls appear to be gone
6 already.

7 I know what you mean

8 but give me one truly alive woman
9 tonight
10 walking across the floor toward me

11 and you can have all the poems

12 the good ones
13 the bad ones
14 or any that I might write
15 after this one.

16 I know what you mean.

17 do you know what I mean?

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the escape

1 escape from the black widow spider
2 is a miracle as great as art.
3 what a web she can weave
4 slowly drawing you to her
5 she'll embrace you
6 then when she's satisfied
7 she'll kill you
8 still in her embrace
9 and suck the blood from you.

10 I escaped my black widow
11 because she had too many males

12 in her web
13 and while she was embracing one
14 and then the other and then
15 another
16 I worked free
17 got out
18 to where I was before.

19 she'll miss me---
20 not my love
21 but the taste of my blood,
22 but she's good, she'll find other
23 blood;
24 she's so good that I almost miss my death,
25 but not quite;
26 I've escaped. I view the other
27 webs.

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the drill

1 our marriage book, it
2 says.
3 I look through it.
4 they lasted ten years.
5 they were young once.
6 now I sleep in her bed.
7 he phones her:
8 "I want my drill back.
9 have it ready.
10 I'll pick the children up at
11 ten."
12 when he arrives he waits outside
13 the door.
14 his children leave with
15 him.
16 she comes back to bed
17 and I stretch a leg out
18 place it against hers.
19 I was young once too.
20 human relationships simply aren't
21 durable.
22 I think back to the women in
23 my life.
24 they seem non-existent.

25 "did he get his drill?" I ask.

26 "yes, he got his drill."

27 I wonder if I'll ever have to come
28 back for my bermuda
29 shorts and my record album
30 by The Academy of St. Martin in the
31 Fields? I suppose I
32 will.

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texan

1 she's from Texas and weighs
2 103 pounds
3 and stands before the
4 mirror combing oceans
5 of reddish hair
6 which falls all the way down
7 her back to her ass.
8 the hair is magic and shoots
9 sparks as I lay on the bed
10 and watch her combing her
11 hair. she's like something
12 out of the movies but she's
13 actually here. we make love
14 at least once a day and
15 she can make me laugh
16 any time she cares
17 to. Texas women are always
18 healthy, and besides that she's
19 cleaned my refrigerator, my sink,
20 the bathroom, and she cooks and
21 feeds me healthy foods
22 and washes the dishes
23 too.

24 "Hank," she told me,
25 holding up a can of grapefruit
26 juice, "this is the best of them
27 all."
28 it says: Texas unsweetened
29 PINK grapefruit juice.

30 she looks like Katherine Hepburn
31 looked when she was
32 in high school, and I watch those
33 103 pounds

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34 combing a yard and some change
35 of reddish hair
36 before the mirror
37 and I feel her inside of my
38 wrists and at the backs of my eyes,
39 and the toes and legs and belly
40 of me feel her and
41 the other part too,
42 and all of Los Angeles falls down
43 and weeps for joy,
44 the walls of the love parlors shake---
45 the ocean rushes in and she turns
46 to me and says, "damn this hair!"
47 and I say,
48 "yes."

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the spider

1 then there was the time in
2 New Orleans
3 I was living with a fat woman,
4 Marie, in the French Quarter
5 and I got very sick.
6 while she was at work
7 I got down on my knees
8 in the kitchen
9 that afternoon and
10 prayed. I was not a
11 religious man
12 but it was a very dark afternoon
13 and I prayed:
14 "Dear God: if you will let me live,
15 I promise You I'll never take
16 another drink."
17 I kneeled there and it was just like
18 a movie---
19 as I finished praying
20 the clouds parted and the sun came
21 through the curtains
22 and fell upon me.
23 then I got up and took a crap.
24 there was a big spider in Marie's bathroom
25 but I crapped anyhow.
26 an hour later I began feeling much
27 better. I took a walk around the Quarter
28 and smiled at people.
29 I stopped at the grocery and got a couple of
30 6 packs for Marie.
31 I began feeling so good that an hour later
32 I sat in the kitchen and opened
33 one of the beers.
34 I drank that and then another one
35 and then I went in and

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36 killed the spider.
37 when Marie got home from work
38 I gave her a big kiss,
39 then sat in the kitchen and talked
40 as she cooked dinner.
41 she asked me what had happened that day
42 and I told her I had killed the
43 spider. she didn't get
44 angry. she was a good
45 sort.

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the end of a short affair

1 I tried it standing up
2 this time.
3 it doesn't usually
4 work.
5 this time it seemed
6 to ...

7 she kept saying
8 "o my God, you've got
9 beautiful legs!"

10 it was all right
11 until she took her feet
12 off the ground
13 and wrapped her legs
14 around my middle.

15 "o my God, you've got
16 beautiful legs!"

17 she weighed about 138
18 pounds and hung there as I
19 worked.

20 it was when I climaxed
21 that I felt the pain
22 fly straight up my
23 spine.

24 I dropped her on the
25 couch and walked around
26 the room.
27 the pain remained.

28 "look," I told her,
29 "you better go. I've got

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30 to develop some film
31 in my dark room."

32 she dressed and left
33 and I walked into the
34 kitchen for a glass of
35 water. I got a glass full
36 in my left hand.
37 the pain ran up behind my
38 ears and
39 I dropped the glass
40 which broke on the floor.

41 I got into a tub full of
42 hot water and epsom salts.
43 I just got stretched out
44 when the phone rang.
45 as I tried to straighten
46 my back
47 the pain extended to my
48 neck and arms.
49 I flopped about
50 gripped the sides of the tub
51 got out
52 with shots of green and yellow
53 and red light
54 flashing in my head.

55 the phone kept ringing.
56 I picked it up.
57 "hello?"

58 "I LOVE YOU!" she said.

59 "thanks," I said.

60 "is that all you've got
61 to say?"

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62 "yes."

63 "eat shit!" she said and
64 hung up.

65 love dries up, I thought
66 as I walked back to the
67 bathroom, even faster
68 than sperm.

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moaning and groaning

1 she writes: you'll
2 be moaning and groan-
3 ing in your poems
4 about how I fucked
5 those 2 guys last week.
6 I know you.
7 she writes on to
8 say that my vibe
9 machine was right---
10 she had just fucked
11 a third guy
12 but she knows I don't
13 want to hear who, why
14 or how. she closes her
15 letter, "Love."

16 rats and roaches
17 have triumphed again.
18 here it comes running
19 with a slug in its
20 mouth, it's singing
21 old love songs.
22 close the windows
23 moan
24 close the doors
25 groan.

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an almost made up poem

1 I see you drinking at a fountain with tiny
2 blue hands, no, your hands are not tiny

3 they are small, and the fountain is in France
4 where you wrote me that last letter and
5 I answered and never heard from you again.
6 you used to write insane poems about
7 ANGELS AND GOD, all in upper case, and you
8 knew famous artists and most of them
9 were your lovers, and I wrote back, it's all right,
10 go ahead, enter their lives, I'm not jealous
11 because we've never met. we got close once in
12 New Orleans, one half block, but never met, never
13 touched. so you went with the famous and wrote
14 about the famous, and, of course, what you found out
15 is that the famous are worried about
16 their fame---not the beautiful young girl in bed
17 with them, who gives them that, and then awakens
18 in the morning to write upper case poems about
19 ANGELS AND GOD. we know God is dead, they've told
20 us, but listening to you I wasn't sure. maybe
21 it was the upper case. you were one of the
22 best female poets and I told the publishers,
23 editors, "print her, print her, she's mad but she's
24 magic. there's no lie in her fire." I loved you
25 like a man loves a woman he never touches, only
26 writes to, keeps little photographs of. I would have
27 loved you more if I had sat in a small room rolling a
28 cigarette and listened to you piss in the bathroom,
29 but that didn't happen. your letters got sadder.
30 your lovers betrayed you. kid, I wrote back, all
31 lovers betray. it didn't help. you said
32 you had a crying bench and it was by a bridge and
33 the bridge was over a river and you sat on the crying
34 bench every night and wept for the lovers who had
35 hurt and forgotten you. I wrote back but never

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36 heard again. a friend wrote me of your suicide
37 3 or 4 months after it happened. if I had met you
38 I would probably have been unfair to you or you
39 to me. it was best like this.

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blue cheese and chili peppers

1 these women are supposed to come
2 and see me
3 but they never
4 do.
5 there's the one with the long scar along her
6 belly.
7 there's the other who writes poems
8 and phones at 3 a.m., saying,
9 "I love you."
10 there's the one who dances with a
11 boa constrictor
12 and writes every four
13 weeks, she'll
14 come, she says.
15 and the 4th who claims she sleeps

16 always
17 with my latest book
18 under her
19 pillow.

20 I whack-off in the heat
21 and listen to Brahms and eat
22 blue cheese with chili
23 peppers.

24 these are women of good mind and
25 body, excellent in or out of bed,
26 dangerous and deadly, of
27 course---
28 but why do they all have to live
29 up north?

30 I know that someday they'll
31 arrive, but two or three
32 on the same day, and

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33 we'll sit around and talk
34 and then they'll all leave
35 together.

36 somebody else will have them
37 and I will walk about
38 in my floppy shorts
39 smoking too many cigarettes
40 and trying to make drama
41 out of
42 no damned progress
43 at all.

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problems about the other woman

1 I had worked my charms on her
2 for a couple of nights in a bar---
3 not that we were new lovers,
4 I had loved her for 16 months
5 but she didn't want to come to my place
6 "because that other woman has been there,"
7 and I said, "all right, all right, what will we do?"

8 she had come in from the north and was looking for a
9 place to stay
10 meanwhile rooming with her girlfriend,
11 and she went to her rent-a-trailer
12 and got out some blankets and said,
13 "let's go to the park."
14 I told her she was crazy
15 the cops would get us
16 but she said, "no, it's nice and foggy,"
17 so we went to the park
18 spread out the equipment and began
19 working and here came headlights---

20 a squad car---
21 she said, "hurry, get your pants on! I've got mine
22 on!"
23 I said, "I can't. they're all twisted-up."
24 and they came with flashlights
25 and asked what we were doing and she said,
26 "kissing!" one of the cops looked at me and
27 said, "I don't blame you," and after some small
28 talk they left us alone.
29 but she still didn't want the bed where that woman
30 had been,
31 so we ended up in a dark hot motel room
32 sweating and kissing and working
33 but we made it all right; but I mean,
34 after all that suffering ...

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35 we were at my place finally
36 that next afternoon
37 doing the same thing.

38 those weren't bad cops though
39 that night in the park---
40 and it's the first time I ever said that
41 about cops,
42 and,
43 I hope,
44 the last time I ever have
45 to.

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T.M.

1 she lived in Galveston and was into
2 T.M.
3 and I went down to visit her and we made love
4 continually even though it was very warm
5 weather
6 and we took mescaline
7 and we took the ferry to the island
8 and drove 200 miles to the nearest
9 racetrack.
10 we both won and sat in a redneck bar---
11 disliked and distrusted by the natives---
12 and then we went to a redneck motel
13 and came back a day or two later
14 and I stayed another week
15 painted her a couple of good paintings---
16 one of a man being hanged
17 and another of a woman being fucked by a wolf.
18 I awakened one night and she wasn't in bed
19 and I got up and walked around saying,
20 "Gloria, Gloria, where are you?"
21 it was a large place and I walked around
22 opening door after door,
23 and then I opened what looked like a closet door
24 and there she was on her knees
25 surrounded by photographs of

26 7 or 8 men
27 heads shaved
28 most of them wearing rimless spectacles.
29 there was a small candle burning
30 and I said, "oh, I'm sorry."
31 Gloria was dressed in a kimono with flying
32 eagles on the back of it.
33 I closed the door and went back to bed.
34 she came out in 15 minutes.
35 we began kissing,
36 her large tongue sliding in and out of my

[Page 54]

37 mouth.
38 she was a large healthy Texas girl.
39 "listen, Gloria," I finally managed to say,
40 "I need a night off."

41 the next day she drove me to the airport.
42 I promised to write. she promised to write.
43 neither of us has written.

[Page 55]

Bee's 5th

1 I heard it first while screwing a blonde
2 who had the biggest box in
3 Scranton.

4 I listened to it again as I wrote a letter
5 to my mother
6 asking for 5,000 dollars
7 and she mailed back
8 3 bottletops and
9 the stems of grandpop's
10 forefingers.

11 The 5th will kill you
12 in the grass or at the track,
13 the kitten said,
14 walking across the popinjay
15 rug.

16 if the 5th don't kill you
17 the tenth will,
18 said the Caliente hooker.
19 as they ran up the
20 beautiful catsup red flag
21 93 thieves wept in the
22 purple dust.

23 the 5th is like an
24 ant in a breakfastnook full of
25 swaggersticks and
26 june bugs
27 sucking
28 dawn's orange juice coming.

29 and I took the 3 bottletops from my
30 mother and

[Page 56]

31 ate them
32 wrapped in pages from
33 Cosmopolitan
34 magazine.

35 but I am tired of the
36 5th
37 and I told this to a woman in
38 Ohio once, I
39 had just packed coal up 3 flights
40 of stairs
41 I was drunk and
42 dizzy, and she said:

43 how can you say you don't care
44 for something greater than you'll
45 ever be?

46 and I said:

47 that's easy.

48 and she sat in a green chair and
49 I sat in a red chair
50 and after that
51 we never made love
52 again.

[Page 57]

103 degrees

1 she cut my toenails the night before,
2 and in the morning she said, "I think I'll
3 just lay here all day."
4 which meant she wasn't going to work.
5 she was at my apartment---which meant another
6 day and another night.
7 she was a good person
8 but she had just told me that she wanted to
9 have a child, wanted marriage, and
10 it was 103 degrees outside.
11 when I thought of another child and
12 another marriage
13 I really began to feel bad.
14 I had resigned myself to dying alone
15 in a small room---
16 now she was trying to reshape my master plan.
17 besides she always slammed my car door too loud
18 and ate with her head too close to the table.
19 this day we had gone to the post office, a department
20 store and then to a sandwich place for lunch.
21 I already felt married. driving back in I almost
22 ran into a Cadillac.
23 "let's get drunk," I said.

24 "no, no," she answered, "it's too early."
25 and then she slammed the car door.
26 it was still 103 degrees.
27 when I opened my mail I found my auto insurance
28 company wanted \$76 more.
29 suddenly she ran into the room and screamed, "LOOK,
I'M
30 TURNING RED! ALL BLOTCHY! WHAT'LL I DO!"
31 "take a bath," I told her.
32 I dialed the insurance company long distance and
33 demanded to know why.
34 she began screaming and moaning from the
35 bathtub and I couldn't hear and I said, "just a

[Page 58]

36 moment, please!"
37 I covered the phone and screamed at her in the
bathtub:
38 "LOOK! I'M ON LONG DISTANCE! HOLD IT DOWN, FOR
CHRIST'S
39 SAKE!"
40 the insurance people still maintained that I owed them

41 \$76 and would send me a letter explaining why.
42 I hung up and stretched out on the bed.
43 I was already married, I felt married.
44 she came out of the bathroom and said, "can I stretch
out
45 beside you?"
46 and I said, "o.k."
47 in ten minutes her color was normal.
48 it was because she had taken a niacin tablet.
49 she remembered that it happened every time.
50 we stretched out there sweating:
51 nerves. nobody has soul enough to overcome nerves.
52 but I couldn't tell her that.
53 she wanted her baby.
54 what the fuck.

[Page 59]

 pacific telephone

1 you go for these wenches, she said,
2 you go for these whores,
3 I'll bore you.

4 I don't want to be shit on anymore,
5 I said,
6 relax.

7 when I drink, she said, it hurts my
8 bladder, it burns.

9 I'll do the drinking, I said.

10 you're waiting for the phone to ring,
11 she said,
12 you keep looking at the phone.

13 if one of those wench's phones you'll
14 run right out of here.

15 I can't promise you anything, I said.

16 then---just like that---the phone rang.

17 this is Madge, said the phone. I've
18 got to see you right away.

19 oh, I said.

20 I'm in a jam, she continued, I need ten
21 bucks---fast.

22 I'll be right over, I said, and
23 hung up.

24 she looked at me. it was a wench,
25 she said, your whole face lit up.

[Page 60]

26 what the hell's the matter with
27 you?

28 listen, I said, I've got to leave.
29 you stay here. I'll be right back.

30 I'm going, she said. I love you but you're
31 crazy, you're doomed.

32 she got her purse and slammed the door.

33 it's probably some deeply-rooted childhood fuckup
34 that makes me vulnerable, I thought.

35 then I left my place and got into my volks.
36 I drove north up Western with the radio on.
37 there were whores walking up and down
38 both sides of the street and Madge looked
39 more vicious than any of them.

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225 pounds

1 we were in bed and
2 she started to fight:
3 "you son of a bitch! you just wait a minute,
4 I'll get you!"

5 I began laughing:
6 "what's the matter? what's the matter?"

7 "you son of a bitch!" she screamed.

8 I held her hands as she squirmed.

9 she was a couple of decades younger than I

10 a health food freak.
11 she was very strong.

12 "you son of a bitch! I'll get you!"
13 she screamed.

14 I rolled on top of her with my 225 pounds and
15 just layed it there on her.

16 "uugg, oooo, my God, that's not fair, oooo, my
17 God!"

18 I rolled off and walked into the other room and
19 sat on the couch.

20 "I'll get you, bastard," she said, "you just
21 wait!"

22 "just don't bite it off," I said, "or you'll make
23 a half dozen women very unhappy."

24 she climbed up on the headboard of my bed
25 (it did have a flat though narrow surface)

[Page 62]

26 and sat perched there watching the news on
27 tv.
28 the tv faced the bedroom and it illuminated
29 her as she sat up there on the
30 headboard.

31 "I thought you were sane," I said, "but you're
32 just as crazy as the rest of them."

33 "be quiet," she said, "I want to watch the
34 news!"

35 "look," I said, "I'll ..."

36 "SHUSH!" she said.

37 and there she was up on the headboard of my bed
38 really watching the news. I accepted her that
39 way.

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turnabout

1 she drives into the parking lot while
2 I am leaning up against the fender of my car.
3 she's drunk and her eyes are wet with tears:
4 "you son of a bitch, you fucked me when you
5 didn't want to. you told me to keep phoning
6 you, you told me to move closer into town,
7 then you told me to leave you alone."

8 it's all quite dramatic and I enjoy it.
9 "sure, well, what do you want?"

10 "I want to talk to you, I want to go to your
11 place and talk to you ..."

12 "I'm with somebody now. she's in getting a
13 sandwich."

14 "I want to talk to you ... it takes a while
15 to get over things. I need more time."

16 "sure. wait until she comes out. we're not
17 inhuman. we'll all have a drink together."

18 "shit," she says, "oh shit!"

19 she jumps into her car and drives off.

20 the other one comes out: "who was that?"

21 "an ex-friend."

22 now she's gone and I'm sitting here drunk
23 and my eyes seem wet with tears.

[Page 64]

24 it's very quiet and I feel like I have a spear
25 rammed into the center of my gut.

26 I walk to the bathroom and puke.

27 mercy, I think, doesn't the human race know anything
28 about mercy?

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one for old snaggle-tooth

1 I know a woman
2 who keeps buying puzzles
3 chinese
4 puzzles
5 blocks
6 wires
7 pieces that finally fit
8 into some order.
9 she works it out
10 mathematically
11 she solves all her
12 puzzles
13 lives down by the sea
14 puts sugar out for the ants
15 and believes
16 ultimately
17 in a better world.
18 her hair is white
19 she seldom combs it
20 her teeth are snagged
21 and she wears loose shapeless
22 coveralls over a body most

23 women would wish they had.
24 for many years she irritated me
25 with what I considered her
26 eccentricities---
27 like soaking eggshells in water
28 (to feed the plants so that
29 they'd get calcium).
30 but finally when I think of her
31 life
32 and compare it to other lives
33 more dazzling, original
34 and beautiful
35 I realize that she has hurt fewer

[Page 66]

36 people than anybody I know
37 (and by hurt I simply mean hurt).
38 she has had some terrible times,
39 times when maybe I should have
40 helped her more
41 for she is the mother of my only
42 child
43 and we were once great lovers,
44 but she has come through
45 like I said
46 she has hurt fewer people than
47 anybody I know,
48 and if you look at it like that,
49 well,
50 she has created a better world.
51 she has won.

52 Frances, this poem is for
53 you.

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communion

1 horses running
2 with her miles away
3 laughing with a
4 fool

5 Bach and the hydrogen bomb
6 and her miles away
7 laughing with a
8 fool

9 the banking system
10 bumper jacks
11 gondolas in Venice
12 and her miles away
13 laughing with a
14 fool

15 you've never quite
16 seen a stairway before
17 (each step looking at you)

18 separately)
19 and outside
20 the newsboy looking
21 immortal
22 as the cars go by
23 under a sun
24 like an enemy
25 and you wonder
26 why it's so hard
27 to go crazy---
28 if you're not already
29 crazy

30 until now
31 you've never seen a

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32 stairway that looked like
33 a stairway
34 a doorknob that looked like
35 a doorknob
36 and sounds like these sounds

37 and when the spider comes out
38 and looks at you
39 finally
40 you don't hate it
41 finally
42 with her miles away
43 laughing with a
44 fool.

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trying to get even:

1 we'd had any number of joints and some
2 beer and I was on the bed stretched out
3 and she said, "look, I've had 3 abortions
4 in a row, real fast, and I'm sick of
5 abortions, I don't want you to stick that
6 thing in me!"

7 it was sticking up there and we were both
8 looking at it.
9 "ah, come on," I said, "my girlfriend fucked
10 2 different guys this week and I'm trying to
11 get even."

12 "don't get me involved in your domestic
13 horseshit! now what I want you to do is
14 to BEAT that thing OFF while I WATCH!
15 I want to WATCH while you beat that thing
16 OFF! I want to see it shoot JUICE!"

17 "o.k. get your face closer."

18 she got it closer and I spit on my palm
19 and began working.

20 it got bigger. just before I was ready I
21 stopped, I held it at the bottom
22 stretching it,
23 the head throbbed
24 purple and shiny.

25 "oooh," she said.
26 she ducked her mouth over it, sucked at
27 it and
28 pulled away.

29 "finish it off," I said.

[Page 70]

30 "no!"

31 I whacked away and then stopped again
32 at the last moment and held it at the
33 bottom and waved it all around the
34 bedroom.

35 she eyed it
36 fell upon it again
37 sucked
38 and pulled away.

39 we alternated the process
40 back and forth

41 again and again.

42 finally I just pulled her off
43 the chair
44 onto the bed
45 rolled on top of her
46 stuck it in
47 worked it
48 worked it
49 and came.

50 when she walked back out of
51 the bathroom she said,
52 "you son of a bitch, I love you,
53 I've loved you for a long time.
54 when I get back to Santa Barbara
55 I'm going to write you. I'm
56 living with this guy but I hate
57 him, I don't even know what I'm
58 doing with him."

59 "o.k.," I said, "but you're up
60 now. can you get me a glass of
61 water? I'm dry."

[Page 71]

62 she walked into the kitchen and
63 I heard her remark that

64 all my drinking glasses were
65 dirty.

66 I told her to use a
67 coffee cup. I
68 heard the water running and I
69 thought, one more fuck
70 I'll be even
71 and I can be in love with my girlfriend again---
72 that is
73 if she hasn't slipped in an
74 extra
75 and she probably
76 has.

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Chicago

1 "I've made it," she said, "I've come
2 through." she had on new boots, pants
3 and a white sweater. "I know what I
4 want now." she was from Chicago and
5 had settled in L.A.'s Fairfax district.

6 "you promised me champagne,"
7 she said.
8 "I was drunk when I phoned. how about
9 a beer?"
10 "no, pass me your joint."
11 she inhaled, let it out:
12 "this isn't very good stuff."
13 she handed it back.

14 "there's a difference," I said, "between
15 making it and simply becoming hard."

16 "you like my boots?"
17 "yes, very nice."
18 "listen, I've got to go. can I use
19 your bathroom?"
20 "sure."

21 when she came out she had on a
22 large lipstick mouth. I hadn't seen
23 one of those since I was a boy.
24 I kissed her in the doorway
25 feeling the lipstick rub off on my
26 lips.

27 "goodbye," she said.
28 "goodbye," I said.

29 she went up the walk toward her car.
30 I closed the door.

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31 she knew what she wanted and it wasn't
32 me.

33 I know more women like that than any
34 other kind.

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quiet clean girls in gingham dresses ...

1 all I've ever known are whores, ex-prostitutes,
2 madwomen. I see men with quiet,
3 gentle women---I see them in the supermarkets,
4 I see them walking down the streets together,
5 I see them in their apartments: people at
6 peace, living together. I know that their
7 peace is only partial, but there is
8 peace, often hours and days of peace.

9 all I've ever known are pill freaks, alcoholics,
10 whores, ex-prostitutes, madwomen.

11 when one leaves
12 another arrives
13 worse than her predecessor.

14 I see so many men with quiet clean girls in
15 gingham dresses
16 girls with faces that are not wolverine or
17 predatory.

18 "don't ever bring a whore around," I tell my
19 few friends, "I'll fall in love with her."

20 "you couldn't stand a good woman, Bukowski."

21 I need a good woman. I need a good woman
22 more than I need this typewriter, more than
23 I need my automobile, more than I need
24 Mozart; I need a good woman so badly that I
25 can taste her in the air, I can feel her
26 at my fingertips, I can see sidewalks built
27 for her feet to walk upon,
28 I can see pillows for her head,
29 I can feel my waiting laughter,

[Page 75]

30 I can see her petting a cat,
31 I can see her sleeping,
32 I can see her slippers on the floor.

33 I know that she exists
34 but where is she upon this earth
35 as the whores keep finding me?

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we will taste the islands and the sea

1 I know that some night
2 in some bedroom
3 soon

4 my fingers will
5 rift
6 through
7 soft clean
8 hair

9 songs such as no radio
10 plays

11 all sadness, grinning
12 into flow.

[Page 77]

2
me, and
that old woman:
sorrow

[Page 79]

this poet

[1] this poet he'
d been drink
ing 2 or 3 da
ys and he wa
lked out on t
he stage and
looked at th
at audience
and he just k
new he was
going to do i
t. there was
a grand pian
o on stage a
nd he walke
d over and li
fted the lid a
nd vomited i
nside the pia
no. then he c
losed the lid
and gave his
reading.

[2] they had to r
emove the st
rings from t
he piano and
wash out the
insides and r
estring it.

[3] I can unders

[Page 80]

tand why th

ey never invi
ted him bac
k. but to pas
s the word o
n to other un
iversities tha
t he was a
poet who lik
ed to vomit i
nto grand pi
anos was un
fair.

[4] they never c
onsidered th
e quality of
his reading.
I know this
poet: he's ju
st like the re
st of us: he'l
I vomit anyw
here for mon
ey.

[Page 81]

winter

1 big sloppy wounded dog
2 hit by a car and walking
3 toward the curbing
4 making enormous
5 sounds
6 your body curled
7 red blowing out of
8 ass and mouth.

9 I stare at him and
10 drive on
11 for how would it look
12 for me to be holding
13 a dying dog on a
14 curbing in Arcadia,
15 blood seeping into my
16 shirt and pants and
17 shorts and socks and
18 shoes? it would just
19 look dumb.
20 besides, I figure the 2
21 horse in the first race
22 and I wanted to hook
23 him with the 9
24 in the second. I
25 figured the daily to
26 pay around \$140
27 so I had to let that
28 dog die alone there
29 just across from the
30 shopping center

31 with the ladies look-
32 ing for bargains
33 as the first bit of
34 snow fell upon the
35 Sierra Madre.

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what they want

1 Vallejo writing about
2 loneliness while starving to
3 death;
4 Van Gogh's ear rejected by a
5 whore;
6 Rimbaud running off to Africa
7 to look for gold and finding
8 an incurable case of syphilis;
9 Beethoven gone deaf;
10 Pound dragged through the streets
11 in a cage;
12 Chatterton taking rat poison;
13 Hemingway's brains dropping into
14 the orange juice;
15 Pascal cutting his wrists
16 in the bathtub;
17 Artaud locked up with the mad;
18 Dostoevsky stood up against a wall;
19 Crane jumping into a boat propeller;
20 Lorca shot in the road by Spanish
21 troops;
22 Berryman jumping off a bridge;
23 Burroughs shooting his wife;
24 Mailer knifing his.
25 ---that's what they want:
26 a God damned show
27 a lit billboard
28 in the middle of hell.
29 that's what they want,
30 that bunch of
31 dull
32 inarticulate
33 safe
34 dreary
35 admirers of
36 carnivals.

[Page 83]

Iron Mike

1 we talk about this film:
2 Cagney fed this broad
3 grapefruit
4 faster than she could
5 eat it and
6 then she
7 loved him.
8 "that won't always

9 work," I told Iron
10 Mike.

11 he grinned and said,
12 "yeh."

13 then he reached down
14 and touched his belt.
15 32 female scalps
16 dangled there.

17 "me and my big Jewish
18 cock," he said.

19 then he raised his hands
20 to indicate the
21 size.

22 "o, yeh, well,"
23 I said.

24 "they come around," he
25 said, "I fuck 'em, they
26 hang around, I tell 'em,
27 'it's time to leave.'"

[Page 84]

28 "you've got guts,
29 Mike."

30 "this one wouldn't leave
31 so I just got up and
32 slapped her ... she
33 left."

34 "I don't have your nerve,
35 Mike. they hang around
36 washing dishes, rubbing
37 the shit-stains out of the
38 crapper, throwing out the
39 old Racing Forms ..."

40 "they'll never get me,"
41 he said,
42 "I'm invincible."

43 look, Mike, no man is
44 invincible.
45 some day
46 you'll be sent mad by
47 eyes like a child's crayon
48 drawing. you won't be
49 able to drink a glass of
50 water or walk across a
51 room. there will be the
52 walls and the sound of
53 the streets outside, and
54 you'll hear machineguns
55 and mortar shells. that'll

56 be when you want it and
57 can't have it.

58 the teeth
59 are never finally the
60 teeth of love.

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guru

1 big black beard
2 tells me
3 that I don't feel
4 terror

5 I look at him
6 my gut rattles
7 gravel

8 I see his eyes
9 look upward

10 he's strong

11 has dirty fingernails

12 and upon the walls:
13 scabbards.

14 he knows things:

15 books
16 the odds
17 the best road
18 home

19 I like him
20 but I think he
21 lies

22 (I'm not sure
23 he lies)

24 his wife sits
25 in a dark

[Page 86]

26 corner

27 when I first met
28 her she was the
29 most beautiful
30 woman
31 I had ever
32 seen

33 now she has
34 become

35 his twin
36 perhaps not his
37 fault:
38 perhaps the thing
39 does us all
40 like that
41 yet after I leave
42 their house
43 I feel terror
44 the moon looks
45 diseased
46 my hands slip
47 on the
48 steering wheel
49 I get my car
50 out
51 and down the
52 hill
53 almost crash it
54 into a
55 blue-green
56 parked car

[Page 87]

57 clod me forever,
58 Beatrice
59 wavering poet, ha
60 haha
61 dinky dog of
62 terror.

[Page 88]

the professors

1 sitting with the professors
2 we talk about Allen Tate
3 and John Crow Ransom
4 the rugs are clean and
5 the coffeetables shine
6 and there is talk of
7 budgets and works in
8 progress
9 and there is a
10 fireplace.
11 the kitchen floor is
12 well-waxed
13 and I have just eaten
14 dinner
15 after drinking until

16 3 a.m.
17 after reading
18 the night before

19 now I'm to read again
20 at a nearby college.
21 I'm in Arkansas in
22 January
23 somebody even mentions
24 Faulkner
25 I go to the bathroom
26 and vomit up the
27 dinner
28 when I come out
29 they are all in their
30 coats and overcoats
31 waiting in the
32 kitchen.
33 I'm to read in
34 15 minutes.

[Page 89]

35 there'll be a
36 good crowd
37 they tell me.

[Page 90]

for Al---

1 don't worry about rejections, pard,
2 I've been rejected
3 before.

4 sometimes you make a mistake, taking
5 the wrong poem
6 more often I make the mistake, writing
7 it.

8 but I like a mount in every race
9 even though the man
10 who puts up the morning line

11 tabs it 30 to one.

12 I get to thinking about death more and
13 more

14 senility

15 crutches

16 armchairs

17 writing purple poetry with a
18 dripping pen

19 when the young girls with mouths
20 like barracudas

21 bodies like lemon trees
22 bodies like clouds
23 bodies like flashes of lightning
24 stop knocking on my door.

25 don't worry about rejections, pard.

[Page 91]

26 I have smoked 25 cigarettes tonight
27 and you know about the beer.

28 the phone has only rung once:
29 wrong number.

[Page 92]

how to be a great writer

1 you've got to fuck a great many women
2 beautiful women
3 and write a few decent love poems.

4 and don't worry about age
5 and/or freshly-arrived talents.

6 just drink more beer
7 more and more beer

8 and attend the racetrack at least once a
9 week

10 and win
11 if possible.

12 learning to win is hard---
13 any slob can be a good loser.

14 and don't forget your Brahms
15 and your Bach and your
16 beer.

17 don't overexercise.

18 sleep until noon.

19 avoid credit cards

20 or paying for anything on
21 time.

22 remember that there isn't a piece of ass
23 in this world worth over \$50
24 (in 1977).

[Page 93]

25 and if you have the ability to love
26 love yourself first
27 but always be aware of the possibility of

28 total defeat
29 whether the reason for that defeat
30 seems right or wrong---

31 an early taste of death is not necessarily
32 a bad thing.

33 stay out of churches and bars and museums,
34 and like the spider be
35 patient---
36 time is everybody's cross,
37 plus
38 exile
39 defeat
40 treachery

41 all that dross.

42 stay with the beer.

43 beer is continuous blood.

44 a continuous lover.

45 get a large typewriter
46 and as the footsteps go up and down
47 outside your window

48 hit that thing
49 hit it hard

50 make it a heavyweight fight

51 make it the bull when he first charges in

52 and remember the old dogs
53 who fought so well:
54 Hemingway, Celine, Dostoevsky, Hamsun.

[Page 94]

55 if you think they didn't go crazy
56 in tiny rooms
57 just like you're doing now

58 without women
59 without food
60 without hope

61 then you're not ready.

62 drink more beer.
63 there's time.
64 and if there's not
65 that's all right
66 too.

[Page 95]

the price

1 drinking 15 dollar champagne---
2 Cordon Rouge---with the hookers.

3 one is named Georgia and she
4 doesn't like pantyhose:
5 I keep helping her pull up
6 her long dark stockings.

7 the other is Pam---prettier
8 but not much soul, and
9 we smoke and talk and I
10 play with their legs and
11 stick my bare foot into
12 Georgia's open purse.
13 it's filled with
14 bottles of pills. I
15 take some of the pills.

16 "listen," I say, "one of
17 you has soul, the other
18 looks. can't I combine
19 the 2 of you? take the soul
20 and stick it into the looks?"

21 "you want me," says Pam, "it
22 will cost you a hundred."

23 we drink some more and Georgia
24 falls to the floor and can't
25 get up.

26 I tell Pam that I like her
27 earrings very much. her
28 hair is long and a natural
29 red.

[Page 96]

30 "I was only kidding about the
31 hundred," she says.

32 "oh," I say, "what will it cost
33 me?"

34 she lights her cigarette with
35 my lighter and looks at me
36 through the flame:

37 her eyes tell me.

38 "look," I say, "I don't think I
39 can ever pay that price again."

40 she crosses her legs
41 inhales on her cigarette

42 as she exhales she smiles
43 and says, "sure you can."

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alone with everybody

1 the flesh covers the bone
2 and they put a mind
3 in there and
4 sometimes a soul,
5 and the women break
6 vases against the walls
7 and the men drink too
8 much
9 and nobody finds the
10 one
11 but they keep
12 looking
13 crawling in and out
14 of beds.
15 flesh covers
16 the bone and the
17 flesh searches
18 for more than
19 flesh.

20 there's no chance
21 at all:
22 we are all trapped
23 by a singular
24 fate.

25 nobody ever finds
26 the one.

27 the city dumps fill
28 the junkyards fill
29 the madhouses fill
30 the hospitals fill
31 the graveyards fill

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32 nothing else
33 fills.

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the 2nd novel

1 they'd come around and
2 they'd ask
3 "you finished your
4 2nd novel yet?"
5 "no."
6 "whatsamatta? whatsamatta
7 that you can't
8 finish it?"
9 "hemorrhoids and

10 insomnia."
11 "maybe you've lost
12 it?"
13 "lost what?"
14 "you know."
15 now when they come
16 around I tell them,
17 "yeh. I finished
18 it. be out in Sept."
19 "you finished it?"
20 "yeh."
21 "well, listen, I gotta
22 go."

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23 even the cat
24 here in the courtyard
25 won't come to my door
26 anymore.
27 it's nice.

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Chopin Bukowski

1 this is my piano.
2 the phone rings and people ask,
3 what are you doing? how about
4 getting drunk with us?
5 and I say,
6 I'm at my piano.
7 what?
8 I'm at my piano.
9 I hang up.
10 people need me. I fill
11 them. if they can't see me
12 for a while they get desperate, they get
13 sick.
14 but if I see them too often
15 I get sick. it's hard to feed
16 without getting fed.
17 my piano says things back to
18 me.

19 sometimes the things are
20 scrambled and not very good.
21 other times
22 I get as good and lucky as
23 Chopin.

24 sometimes I get out of practice
25 out of tune. that's
26 all right.

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27 I can sit down and vomit on the
28 keys
29 but it's my
30 vomit.

31 it's better than sitting in a room
32 with 3 or 4 people and
33 their pianos.

34 this is my piano
35 and it is better than theirs.

36 and they like it and they do not
37 like it.

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gloomy lady

1 she sits up there
2 drinking wine
3 while her husband
4 is at work.
5 she puts quite
6 some importance
7 upon getting her
8 poems published
9 in the little
10 magazines.
11 she's had two or
12 three of her slim
13 volumes of poems
14 done in mimeo.
15 she has two or
16 three children
17 between the ages
18 of 6 and 15.
19 she is no longer
20 the beautiful woman
21 she was. she sends
22 photos of herself
23 sitting upon a rock
24 by the ocean
25 alone and damned.
26 I could have had
27 her once. I wonder
28 if she thinks I

29 could have
30 saved her?

31 in all her poems
32 her husband is
33 never mentioned.
34 but she does

[Page 104]

35 talk about her
36 garden
37 so we know that's
38 there, anyhow,
39 and maybe she
40 fucks the rosebuds
41 and finches
42 before she writes
43 her poems

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cockroach

1 the cockroach crouched
2 against the tile
3 while I was pissing and as
4 I turned my head
5 he hauled his butt
6 into a crack.
7 I got the can and sprayed
8 and sprayed and sprayed
9 and finally the roach came out
10 and gave me a very dirty look.
11 then he fell down into
12 the bathtub and I watched
13 him dying
14 with a subtle pleasure
15 because I paid the rent
16 and he didn't.
17 I picked him up with
18 some greenblue toilet
19 paper and flushed him
20 away. that's all there
21 was to that, except
22 around Hollywood and
23 Western we have to
24 keep doing it.
25 they say some day that
26 tribe is going to
27 inherit the earth
28 but we're going to
29 make them wait a
30 few months.

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who in the hell is Tom Jones?

1 I was shackled with a

2 24 year old girl from
3 New York City for
4 two weeks---about
5 the time of the garbage
6 strike out there, and
7 one night my 34 year
8 old woman arrived and
9 she said, "I want to see
10 my rival." she did
11 and then she said, "o,
12 you're a cute little thing!"
13 next I knew there was a
14 screech of wildcats---
15 such screaming and scratch-
16 ing, wounded animal moans,
17 blood and piss ...

18 I was drunk and in my
19 shorts. I tried to
20 separate them and fell,
21 wrenched my knee. then
22 they were through the screen
23 door and down the walk
24 and out in the street.

25 squadcars full of cops
26 arrived. a police heli-
27 copter circled overhead.

28 I stood in the bathroom
29 and grinned in the mirror.
30 it's not often at the age
31 of 55 that such splendid

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32 things occur.
33 better than the Watts
34 riots.

35 the 34 year old
36 came back in. she had
37 pissed all over her-
38 self and her clothing
39 was torn and she was
40 followed by 2 cops who
41 wanted to know why.

42 pulling up my shorts
43 I tried to explain.

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defeat

1 listening to Bruckner on the radio
2 wondering why I'm not half mad
3 over the latest breakup with my
4 latest girlfriend

5 wondering why I'm not driving the streets
6 drunk
7 wondering why I'm not in the bedroom
8 in the dark
9 in the grievous dark
10 pondering
11 ripped by half-thoughts.

12 I suppose
13 that at last
14 like the average man:
15 I've known too many women
16 and instead of thinking,
17 I wonder who's fucking her now?
18 I think
19 she's giving some other poor son of a bitch
20 much trouble right now.

21 listening to Bruckner on the radio
22 seems so peaceful.

23 too many women have gone through.
24 I am at last alone
25 without being alone.

26 I pick up a Grumbacher paint brush
27 and clean my fingernails with the hard sharp end.

28 I notice a wall socket.

29 look, I've won.

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traffic signals

1 the old folks play a game
2 in the park overlooking the sea
3 shoving markers across cement
4 with wooden sticks.
5 four play, two on each side
6 and 18 or 20 others sit in
7 the sun and watch
8 I notice this as I move
9 toward the public facility
10 as my car is being repaired.

11 an old cannon sits in the park
12 rusted and useless.
13 six or seven sailboats ride
14 the sea below.

15 I finish my duty
16 come out
17 and they are still playing.

18 one of the women is heavily rouged
19 wearing false eyelashes and smoking
20 a cigarette.
21 the men are very thin

22 very pale
23 wear wristwatches that hurt
24 their wrists.

25 the other woman is very fat
26 and giggles
27 each time a score is made

28 some of them are my age.

29 they disgust me
30 the way they wait for death

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31 with as much passion
32 as a traffic signal.

33 these are the people who believe advertisements
34 these are the people who buy dentures on credit
35 these are the people who celebrate holidays
36 these are the people who have grandchildren
37 these are the people who vote
38 these are the people who have funerals

39 these are the dead
40 the smog
41 the stink in the air
42 the lepers.

43 these are almost everybody
44 finally.

45 seagulls are better
46 seaweed is better
47 dirty sand is better

48 if I could turn that old cannon
49 on them
50 and make it work
51 I would.

52 they disgust me.

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462-0614

1 I get many phonecalls now.
2 They are all alike.
3 "are you Charles Bukowski,
4 the writer?"
5 "yes," I tell them.
6 and they tell me
7 that they understand my
8 writing,
9 and some of them are writers
10 or want to be writers
11 and they have dull and
12 horrible jobs

13 and they can't face the room
14 the apartment
15 the walls
16 that night---
17 they want somebody to talk
18 to,
19 and they can't believe
20 that I can't help them
21 that I don't know the words.
22 they can't believe
23 that often now
24 I double up in my room
25 grab my gut
26 and say
27 "Jesus Jesus Jesus, not
28 again!"
29 they can't believe
30 that the loveless people
31 the streets
32 the loneliness
33 the walls
34 are mine too.
35 and when I hang up the phone

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36 they think I have held back my
37 secret.

38 I don't write out of
39 knowledge.
40 when the phone rings
41 I too would like to hear words
42 that might ease
43 some of this.

44 that's why my number's
45 listed.

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photographs

1 they photograph you on your porch
2 and on your couch
3 and standing in the courtyard
4 or leaning against your car

5 these photographers
6 women with big asses
7 which look better to you
8 than do their eyes or their souls

9 ---this playing at author
10 it's real Hemingway
11 James Joyce
12 stageshit

13 but look---
14 there are the books

15 you've written them
16 you haven't been to Paris
17 but you've written all those books
18 there behind you
19 (and others not there,
20 lost or stolen)

21 all you've got to do
22 is look like Bukowski
23 for the cameras
24 but

25 you keep watching
26 those
27 astonishingly big asses
28 and thinking---
29 somebody else is getting
30 it

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31 "look into my eyes,"
32 they say and click their cameras
33 and flash their cameras
34 and fondle their cameras

35 Hemingway used to box or go
36 fishing or to the bullfights
37 but after they leave
38 you jerk-off into the sheets
39 and take a hot bath

40 they never send the photos
41 like they promise to send the photos
42 and the astonishingly big asses are
43 gone forever
44 and you've been a fine literary fellow---
45 now alive
46 dead soon enough
47 looking into and at their eyes and souls
48 and more.

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social

1 the blue pencil of the wave
2 shots of yellow road

3 a steering wheel
4 an insane woman sitting
5 next to you

6 complaining as the ocean
7 creams-off

8 and people in yellow and
9 white
10 campers
11 block your way

12 a frantic
13 time
14 as you listen
15 guilty of this and
16 guilty of that

17 you admit
18 this and that
19 but it's not
20 enough

21 she wants splendid
22 conquest
23 and you're weary of
24 splendid
25 conquest

26 getting there
27 she climbs out
28 walks toward the
29 house

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30 you piss across the
31 fender of your car
32 drunk on beer

33 little spots of you
34 dripping down into
35 the dust
36 the dry
37 dust

38 zipping up you
39 march in to
40 meet her
41 friends.

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one to the breastplate

1 I have a saying, "the tough ones always come
2 back."

3 but Vera was kinder than most,
4 and so I was surprised when
5 she arrived that night
6 and said, "let me in."

7 "no, no, I'm working on a sonnet."

8 "I'll just stay a minute, then I'll
9 leave."

10 "Vera, if I let you in you'll be here
11 for 3 or 4 days."

12 it was night and I hadn't turned the

13 porch light on so I couldn't see it
14 coming
15 but
16 she threw a right that
17 exploded in the center of my
18 chest.

19 "baby, that was a beautiful punch.
20 now move off."

21 then I closed the door.

22 she was back again in 5 minutes:
23 "Hank, I can't find my car, I
24 swear I can't find my car. help
25 me find my car!"

26 I saw my friend Bobby-the-Riff

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27 walking by. "hey, Bobby, help
28 this one find her car. we'll
29 even it up later."

30 they went off together.

31 later Bobby said they found her
32 car parked on somebody's front
33 lawn, lights on and motor
34 running.

35 I haven't heard from Vera
36 since
37 unless she's the one
38 who keeps phoning at
39 2 and 3 and 4 a.m. in the
40 morning
41 and doesn't answer when I
42 say "hello."

43 but Bobby says he
44 can handle her
45 so I've decided to turn her over
46 to Bobby.

47 she lives on a side street somewhere
48 in Glendale
49 and I help him unfold the
50 roadmap as we sip our
51 diet Schlitz.

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the worst and the best

1 in the hospitals and jails
2 it's the worst
3 in madhouses
4 it's the worst

5 in penthouses
6 it's the worst
7 in skid row flophouses
8 it's the worst
9 at poetry readings
10 at rock concerts
11 at benefits for the disabled
12 it's the worst
13 at funerals
14 at weddings
15 it's the worst
16 at parades
17 at skating rinks
18 at sexual orgies
19 it's the worst
20 at midnight
21 at 3 a.m.
22 at 5:45 p.m.
23 it's the worst

24 falling through the sky
25 firing squads
26 that's the best

27 thinking of India
28 looking at popcorn stands
29 watching the bull get the matador
30 that's the best

31 boxed lightbulbs
32 an old dog scratching

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33 peanuts in a celluloid bag
34 that's the best

35 spraying roaches
36 a clean pair of stockings
37 natural guts defeating natural talent
38 that's the best

39 in front of firing squads
40 throwing crusts to seagulls
41 slicing tomatoes
42 that's the best

43 rugs with cigarette burns
44 cracks in sidewalks
45 waitresses still sane
46 that's the best

47 my hands dead
48 my heart dead
49 silence
50 adagio of rocks
51 the world ablaze
52 that's the best
53 for me.

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coupons

1 cigarettes wetted with beer from
2 the night before
3 you light one
4 gag
5 open the door for air
6 and on your doorstep
7 is a dead sparrow
8 his head and breast
9 chewed away.

10 hanging from the doorknob
11 is an ad from the All American
12 Burger
13 consisting of several coupons
14 which
15 say
16 that with the purchase
17 of a burger
18 from Feb. 12 thru Feb. 15
19 you can get a free
20 regular size bag of french
21 fries and one
22 10 oz. cup of coca cola.

23 I take the ad
24 wrap the sparrow
25 carry him to the trash bin
26 and dump him
27 in.

28 look:
29 forsaking fries and coke
30 to help keep
31 my city
32 clean.

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luck

1 what's bad about all
2 this
3 is watching people
4 drinking coffee and
5 waiting. I would
6 douse them all
7 with luck. they need
8 it. they need it
9 worse than I do.

10 I sit in cafes
11 and watch them
12 waiting. I suppose
13 there's not much
14 else to do. the
15 flies walk up and

16 down the windows
17 and we drink our
18 coffee and pretend
19 not to look at
20 each other. I
21 wait with them.
22 between the move-
23 ment of the flies
24 people walk by.

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dog

1 a single dog
2 walking alone on a hot sidewalk of
3 summer
4 appears to have the power
5 of ten thousand gods.

6 why is this?

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trench warfare

1 sick with the flu
2 drinking beer
3 my radio on loud
4 enough to overcome
5 the sounds of the
6 stereo people who
7 have just moved
8 into the court
9 across the way.
10 asleep or awake
11 they play their
12 set at top volume
13 leaving their
14 doors and windows
15 open.

16 they are each
17 18, married, wear
18 red shoes,
19 are blonde,
20 slim.
21 they play
22 everything: jazz,
23 classical, rock,
24 country, modern
25 as long as it is
26 loud.

27 this is the problem
28 of being poor:
29 we must share each
30 other's sounds.
31 last week it was
32 my turn:

33 there were two women

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34 in here
35 fighting each other
36 and then they
37 ran up the walk
38 screaming.
39 the police came.

40 now it's their
41 turn.
42 now I am walking
43 up and down in
44 my dirty shorts,
45 two rubber earplugs
46 stuck deep into
47 my ears.

48 I even consider
49 murder.
50 such rude little
51 rabbits!
52 walking little pieces
53 of snot!

54 but in our land
55 and in our way
56 there has never
57 been a chance;
58 it's only when
59 things are not
60 going too badly
61 for a while
62 that we forget.

63 someday they'll
64 each be dead
65 someday they'll
66 each have a
67 separate coffin
68 and it will be
69 quiet.

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70 but right now
71 it's Bob Dylan
72 Bob Dylan Bob
73 Dylan all the
74 way.

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 the night I fucked my alarm clock

1 once
2 starving in Philadelphia
3 I had a small room

4 it was evening going into night
5 and I stood at my window on the 3rd floor
6 in the dark and looked down into a
7 kitchen across the way on the 2nd floor
8 and I saw a beautiful blonde girl
9 embrace a young man there and kiss him
10 with what seemed hunger
11 and I stood and watched until they broke
12 away.
13 then I turned and switched on the room light.
14 I saw my dresser and my dresser drawers
15 and my alarm clock on the dresser.
16 I took my alarm clock
17 to bed with me and
18 fucked it until the hands dropped off.
19 then I went out and walked the streets
20 until my feet blistered.
21 when I got back I walked to the window
22 and looked down and across the way
23 and the light in their kitchen was
24 out.

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when I think of myself dead

1 I think of automobiles parked in a
2 parking lot

3 when I think of myself dead
4 I think of frying pans

5 when I think of myself dead
6 I think of somebody making love to you
7 when I'm not around

8 when I think of myself dead
9 I have trouble breathing

10 when I think of myself dead
11 I think of all the people waiting to die

12 when I think of myself dead
13 I think I won't be able to drink water anymore

14 when I think of myself dead
15 the air goes all white

16 the roaches in my kitchen
17 tremble

18 and somebody will have to throw
19 my clean and dirty underwear
20 away.

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Christmas eve, alone

1 Christmas eve, alone,

2 in a motel room
3 down the coast
4 near the Pacific---
5 hear it?

6 they've tried to do this place up
7 Spanish, there's
8 tapestry and lamps, and
9 the toilet's clean, there are
10 tiny bars of pink
11 soap.

12 they won't find us
13 here:
14 the barracudas or the ladies or
15 the idol
16 worshippers.

17 back in town
18 they're drunk and panicked
19 running red lights
20 breaking their heads open
21 in honor of Christ's
22 birthday. that's nice.

23 soon I'll finish this 5th of
24 Puerto Rican rum.
25 in the morning I'll vomit and
26 shower, drive back
27 in, have a sandwich by 1 p.m.,
28 be back in my room by
29 2,
30 stretched on the bed,
31 waiting for the phone to ring,

[Page 130]

32 not answering,
33 my holiday is an
34 evasion, my reasoning
35 is not.

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there once was a woman who put her head into an oven

1 terror finally becomes almost
2 bearable
3 but never quite

4 terror creeps like a cat
5 crawls like a cat
6 across my mind

7 I can hear the laughter of the masses

8 they are strong
9 they will survive

10 like the roach

11 never take your eyes off the roach
12 you'll never see it again.
13 the masses are everywhere
14 they know how to do things:
15 they have sane and deadly angers
16 for sane and deadly
17 things.
18 I wish I were driving a blue 1952 Buick
19 or a dark blue 1942 Buick
20 or a blue 1932 Buick
21 over a cliff of hell and into the
22 sea.

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beds, toilets, you and me---

1 think of the beds
2 used again and again
3 to fuck in
4 to die in.
5 in this land
6 some of us fuck more than
7 we die
8 but most of us die
9 better than we
10 fuck,
11 and we die
12 piece by piece too---
13 in parks
14 eating ice cream, or
15 in igloos
16 of dementia,
17 or on straw mats
18 or upon disembarked
19 loves
20 or
21 or.
22 :beds beds beds
23 :toilets toilets toilets
24 the human sewage system
25 is the world's greatest
26 invention.
27 and you invented me
28 and I invented you
29 and that's why we don't
30 get along

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31 on this bed
32 any longer.

33 you were the world's
34 greatest invention
35 until you
36 flushed me
37 away.

38 now it's your turn
39 to wait for the touch
40 of the handle.
41 somebody will do it
42 to you,
43 bitch,
44 and if they don't
45 you will---
46 mixed with your own
47 green or yellow or white
48 or blue
49 or lavender
50 goodbye.

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 this then---

1 it's the same as before
2 or the other time
3 or the time before that.
4 here's a cock
5 and here's a cunt
6 and here's trouble.

7 only each time
8 you think
9 well now I've learned:
10 I'll let her do that
11 and I'll do this,
12 I no longer want it all,
13 just some comfort
14 and some sex
15 and only a minor
16 love.

17 now I'm waiting again
18 and the years run thin.
19 I have my radio
20 and the kitchen walls
21 are yellow.
22 I keep dumping bottles
23 and listening
24 for footsteps.

25 I hope that death contains
26 less than this.

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 imagination and reality

1 there are many single women in the world
2 with one or two or three children

3 and one wonders where the husbands
4 have gone or where the lovers have
5 gone
6 leaving behind
7 all those hands and eyes and feet
8 and voices.
9 as I pass through their homes
10 I like opening cupboards and
11 looking in
12 or under the sink
13 or in a closet---
14 I expect to find the husband
15 or lover and he'll tell me:
16 "hey, buddy, didn't you notice her
17 stretch-marks, she's got stretch-marks
18 and floppy tits and she eats
19 onions all the time and farts ... but
20 I'm a handy man. I can fix things,
21 I know how to use a turret-lathe and
22 I make my own oil changes. I can shoot
23 pool, bowl, and I can finish 5th or
24 6th in any cross-country marathon
25 anywhere. I've got a set of golf
26 clubs, can shoot in the 80's. I know
27 where the clit is and what to do about
28 it. I've got a cowboy hat with the brim
29 turned straight up at the sides.
30 I'm good with the lasso and the dukes
31 and I know all the latest dance steps."

32 and I'll say, "look, I was just leaving."
33 and I will leave before he can challenge me
34 to arm-wrestling

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35 or tell a dirty joke
36 or show me the dancing tattoo on his
37 right bicep.

38 but really
39 all I find in the cupboards are
40 coffee cups and large cracked brown plates
41 and under the sink a stack of hardened
42 rags, and in the closet---more coathangers
43 than clothes, and it's not until she shows
44 me the photo album and the photos of him---
45 nice enough like a shoehorn, or a cart in
46 the supermarket whose wheels aren't stuck---
47 that the self-doubt leaves, and the
48 pages turn and there's one child on a
49 swing wearing a red outfit and there's
50 the other one
51 chasing a seagull in Santa Monica.
52 and life becomes sad and not dangerous
53 and therefore good enough:
54 to have her bring you a cup of coffee in
55 one of those coffee cups without him
56 jumping out.

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stolen

1 I keep thinking it will be outside
2 now
3 waiting for me
4 blue
5 front bumper twisted
6 Maltese cross hanging
7 from the mirror.
8 rubber floormat
9 twisted under the pedals.
10 20 m.p.g.
11 good old TRV 491
12 the faithful love of a man,
13 the way I put her into second
14 while taking a corner
15 the way she could dig from a signal
16 with any other around.
17 the way we conquered large and
18 small spaces
19 rain
20 sun
21 smog
22 hostility
23 the crush of things.

24 I came out of last Thursday night's
25 fights at the Olympic
26 and my 1967 Volks was gone
27 with another lover
28 to another place.

29 the fights had been good.
30 I called a cab at a Standard station
31 and sat eating a jelly doughnut
32 with coffee in a cafe and
33 waited,

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34 and I knew that if I found
35 the man who stole her
36 I would kill him.

37 the cab came. I waved to the
38 driver, paid for the coffee and
39 doughnut, got out into the night,
40 got in, and told him, "Hollywood
41 and Western," and that particular
42 night was just about over.

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the meek have inherited

1 if I suffer at this
2 typewriter
3 think how I'd feel

4 among the lettuce-
5 pickers of Salinas?

6 I think of the men
7 I've known in
8 factories
9 with no way to
10 get out---
11 choking while living
12 choking while laughing
13 at Bob Hope or Lucille
14 Ball while
15 2 or 3 children beat
16 tennis balls against
17 the walls.

18 some suicides are never
19 recorded.

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the insane always loved me

1 and the subnormal.
2 all through grammar school
3 junior high
4 high school
5 junior college
6 the unwanted would attach
7 themselves to
8 me.
9 guys with one arm
10 guys with twitches
11 guys with speech defects
12 guys with white film
13 over one eye,
14 cowards
15 misanthropes
16 killers
17 peep-freaks
18 and thieves.
19 and all through the
20 factories and on the
21 bum
22 I always drew the
23 unwanted. they found me
24 right off and attached
25 themselves. they
26 still do.
27 in this neighborhood now
28 there's one who's
29 found me.
30 he pushes around a
31 shopping cart
32 filled with trash:
33 broken canes, shoelaces,
34 empty potato chip bags,

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35 milk cartons, newspapers, penholders ...
36 "hey, buddy, how ya doin'?"
37 I stop and we talk a
38 while.
39 then I say goodbye
40 but he still follows
41 me
42 past the beer
43 parlours and the
44 love parlours ...
45 "keep me informed,
46 buddy, keep me informed,
47 I want to know what's
48 going on."
49 he's my new one.
50 I've never seen him
51 talk to anybody
52 else.
53 the cart rattles
54 along a little bit
55 behind me
56 then something
57 falls out.
58 he stops to pick
59 it up.
60 as he does I
61 walk through the
62 front door of the
63 green hotel on the
64 corner
65 pass down through
66 the hall
67 come out the back
68 door and
69 there's a cat
70 shitting there in
71 absolute delight,
72 he grins at
73 me.

[Page 142]

Big Max

1 in junior high school
2 Big Max was a problem.
3 we'd be sitting during lunch hour
4 eating our peanut butter sandwiches
5 and potato chips.
6 he was hairy of nostril
7 and of eyebrow, his lips
8 glistened with spittle.
9 he already wore size ten and a half
10 shoes. his shirts stretched across a
11 massive chest. his wrists looked like
12 two by fours. and he walked up
13 through the shadows behind the gym
14 where we sat, my friend Eli and I.
15 "you guys," he stood there, "you guys
16 sit with your shoulders slumped!

17 you walk around with your shoulders
18 slumped! how are you ever going to
19 make it?"

20 we didn't answer.

21 then Max would look at me.
22 "stand up!"

23 I'd stand up and he'd walk around
24 behind me and say, "square your
25 shoulders like this!"

26 and he'd snap my shoulders back.
27 "there! doesn't that feel better?"

28 "yeah, Max."

29 then he'd walk off and I'd resume a
30 normal posture.

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31 Big Max was ready for the
32 world. it made us sick
33 to look at him.

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trapped

1 in the winter walking on my
2 ceiling my eyes the size of street-
3 lamps. I have 4 feet like a mouse but
4 wash my own underwear---bearded and
5 hungover and a hard-on and no lawyer. I
6 have a face like a washrag. I sing
7 love songs and carry steel.

8 I would rather die than cry. I can't
9 stand hounds can't live without them.
10 I hang my head against the white
11 refrigerator and want to scream like
12 the last weeping of life forever but
13 I am bigger than the mountains.

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it's the way you play the game

1 call it love
2 stand it up in the failing
3 light
4 put it in a dress
5 pray sing beg cry laugh
6 turn off the lights
7 turn on the radio
8 add trimmings:
9 butter, raw eggs, yesterday's
10 newspaper;

11 one new shoelace, then add
12 paprika, sugar, salt, pepper,
13 phone your drunken aunt in
14 Calexico;
15 call it love, you
16 skewer it good, add
17 cabbage and applesauce,
18 then heat it from the
19 left side,
20 then heat it from the right
21 side,
22 put it in a box
23 give it away
24 leave it on a doorstep
25 vomiting as you go
26 into the
27 hydrangea.

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on the continent

1 I'm soft. I
2 dream too.
3 I let myself dream. I dream of
4 being famous. I dream of
5 walking the streets of London and
6 Paris. I dream of
7 sitting in cafes
8 drinking fine wines and
9 taking a taxi back to a good
10 hotel.
11 I dream of
12 meeting beautiful ladies in the hall
13 and
14 turning them away because
15 I have a sonnet in mind that
16 I want to write
17 before sunrise. at sunrise
18 I will be asleep and there will be a
19 strange cat curled up on the
20 windowsill.

21 I think we all feel like this
22 now and then.
23 I'd even like to visit
24 Andernach, Germany, the place where
25 I began. then I'd like to
26 fly on to Moscow to check out
27 their mass transit system so
28 I'd have something faintly lewd to
29 whisper into the ear of the mayor of
30 Los Angeles upon my return to this
31 fucking place.

32 it could happen.
33 I'm ready.

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34 I've watched snails climb over
35 ten foot walls and
36 vanish.

37 you mustn't confuse this with
38 ambition.
39 I would be able to laugh at my
40 good turn of the cards---

41 and I won't forget you.
42 I'll send postcards and
43 snapshots, and the
44 finished sonnet.

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12:18 a.m.

1 beheaded in the middle of the
2 night
3 scratching my sides
4 I am covered with bites
5 kick my white legs out of the sheets
6 as the sirens scream
7 there is a gun blast.

8 I go to the kitchen
9 for a glass of water
10 destroy the reverie of a roach
11 destroy the roach.
12 a gale comes from the North
13 as the man in the apartment across
14 from me
15 inserts his penis into the rump of his
16 4 year old
17 daughter.

18 I hear the screams
19 light a cigar
20 stick it into the lips of my
21 beheaded head.
22 it is half a cigar
23 stale
24 a Medalist Naturáles, No. 7.

25 I walk back to the bedroom
26 with a spray can.
27 I press the button.
28 it hisses. I
29 gag,
30 think of ancient wars
31 loves dead.

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32 so much happens in the dark
33 yet tomorrow
34 the sun will move up and on,
35 you'll get a ticket if you park on the
36 south side of the street on

37 Thursday
38 or the north side on
39 Friday.

40 the efficiency of the sun and the
41 law
42 bulwarks sanity.

43 something bites me.
44 I madden
45 spray half my
46 bedsheets.

47 I turn
48 see the dark mirror---
49 the cigar
50 the loose belly
51 me
52 old.

53 I laugh.

54 it's good they don't
55 know.

56 I take my head

57 put it back on my
58 neck

59 get between the sheets and
60 can't sleep.

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yellow cab

1 the Mexican dancer shook her fans at
2 me and her ass at me, I
3 didn't ask her to and
4 my woman got mad and ran out of the cafe and
5 it began raining and you could hear it on the
6 roof and I didn't have a job and I had 13 days left
7 on the rent.
8 sometimes when a woman runs out on you like
9 that you wonder if it's not
10 economics, you can't blame them---
11 if I had to get fucked I'd rather get fucked
12 by somebody with money.
13 we're all scared but when you're ugly and you
14 don't have much left you get
15 strong, and I called the waiter over and I said,
16 I think I am going to turn this table over, I'm
17 bored, I'm insane, I need
18 action, call in your goon, I'll piss on his
19 collarbone.

20 I got
21 thrown out swiftly. it was

22 raining. I picked myself up in the rain and
23 walked down the empty street
24 cotton candy sweet
25 dumb shit for sale, all the little stores locked
26 with 67¢ Woolworth locks.

27 I reached the end of the street in time
28 to see her get into the yellow cab with
29 another guy.

30 I fell down by a garbage can, stood up
31 and pissed against it, feeling sad and not
32 sad, knowing there was only so much they could do to

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33 you, piss sliding down the corrugated
34 tin, the philosophers must have had something to
35 say about this. women. their luck against your
36 destiny. winner take Barcelona. next
37 bar.

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 how come you're not unlisted?

1 the men phone and ask me that.

2 are you really Charles Bukowski
3 the writer? they ask.

4 I'm a sometimes writer, I say,
5 most often I don't do anything.

6 listen, they ask, I like your
7 stuff---do you mind if I come
8 over and bring a couple of 6
9 packs?

10 you can bring them, I say
11 if you don't come in ...

12 when the women phone, I say,
13 o yes, I write, I'm a writer
14 only I'm not writing right now.

15 I feel foolish phoning you,
16 they say, and I was surprised
17 to find you listed in the phone book.

18 I have reasons, I say,
19 by the way why don't you come over
20 for a beer?

21 you wouldn't mind?

22 and they arrive
23 handsome women
24 good of mind and body and eye.

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25 often there isn't sex
26 but I'm used to that
27 yet it's good
28 very good just to look at them---
29 and some rare times
30 I have unexpected good luck
31 otherwise.

32 for a man of 55 who didn't get laid
33 until he was 23
34 and not very often until he was 50
35 I think that I should stay listed
36 via Pacific Telephone
37 until I get as much as
38 the average man has had.

39 of course, I'll have to keep
40 writing immortal poems
41 but the inspiration is there.

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weather report

1 I suppose it's raining in some Spanish town
2 now
3 while I'm feeling bad
4 like this;
5 I'd like to think so
6 now.
7 let's go to a Mexican hamlet---
8 that sounds nice:
9 a Mexican hamlet
10 while I'm feeling bad
11 like this
12 the walls yellow with age---
13 that rain
14 out there,
15 a pig moving in his pen at night
16 disturbed by the rain,
17 little eyes like cigarette-ends,
18 and his damned tail:
19 see it?
20 I can't imagine the people.
21 it's hard for me to imagine the people.
22 maybe they are feeling bad like this,
23 almost as bad as this.
24 I wonder what they do when they feel
25 bad?
26 they probably don't mention it.
27 they say,
28 "look, it's raining."
29 that's the best way.

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clean old man

1 here I'll be
2 55 in a
3 week.

4 what will I
5 write about
6 when it no
7 longer stands
8 up in the morning?

9 my critics
10 will love it
11 when my playground
12 narrows down to
13 tortoises
14 and shellstars.

15 they might even
16 say
17 nice things about
18 me

19 as if I had
20 finally
21 come to my
22 senses.

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something

1 I'm out of matches.
2 the springs in my couch
3 are broken.
4 they stole my footlocker.
5 they stole my oil painting of
6 two pink eyes.
7 my car broke down.
8 eels climb my bathroom walls.
9 my love is broken.
10 but the stockmarket went up
11 today.

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a plate glass window

1 dogs and angels are not
2 very different.
3 I often go to this place
4 to eat
5 about 2.30 in the afternoon
6 because all the people who eat
7 there are particularly addled
8 simply glad to be alive and
9 eating baked beans
10 near a plate glass window
11 which holds the heat
12 and doesn't let the cars and
13 sidewalks inside.

14 we are allowed as much free
15 coffee as we can drink
16 and we sit and quietly drink
17 the black strong coffee.

18 it is good to be sitting someplace
19 in a world at 2:30 in the afternoon
20 without having the flesh ripped from
21 your bones. even
22 being addled, we know this.

23 nobody bothers us
24 we bother nobody.

25 angels and dogs are not
26 very different
27 at 2:30 in the afternoon.

28 I have my favorite table
29 and after I have finished
30 I stack the plates, saucers,

[Page 158]

31 the cup, the silverware
32 neatly---
33 my offering to the luck---
34 and that sun
35 working good
36 all up and
37 down
38 inside the
39 darkness
40 here.

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junkies

1 "she shoots up in the neck," she told
2 me. I told her to stick it into my
3 ass and she tried and said, "oh oh,"
4 and I said, "what the hell's the matter?"
5 she said, "nothing, this is New York
6 style," and she jammed it in again and said,
7 "oh shit." I took it and put it into
8 my arm, I got part of it.
9 "I don't know why people
10 fuck with the stuff, there's not that
11 much to it. I think they're all losers
12 and they want to lose real bad. there's
13 no other way, it's like they can't
14 get where they're going or want to go
15 and there's no other way.
16 this has got to be it.
17 she shoots up in the neck."

18 "I know," I said. "I phoned her, she
19 could hardly talk, said it was

20 laryngitis. have some of this wine."
21 it was white wine and 4:30 a.m. and her
22 daughter was sleeping in the bedroom. she
23 had cable tv with no sound and
24 a large screen young John Wayne watched
25 us, and we neither kissed nor made
26 love and I left at 6:15 a.m.
27 after the beer and wine were gone
28 so her daughter wouldn't awaken for
29 school and find me sitting in
30 bed with her mother
31 with John Wayne and the night gone
32 and not much chance for anybody---

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99 to one

1 the blazing shark
2 wants my balls
3 as I walk through the meat section
4 looking for salami and cheese

5 purple housewives
6 fingering 75 cent avocados
7 know my shopping cart is an
8 oversized cock

9 I am a man with a switchball watch
10 standing in a honky-tonk phonebooth
11 sucking strawberry red titty
12 upsidedown in a Philadelphia crowd.

13 suddenly all about me are screams of
14 RAPE RAPE RAPE RAPE RAPE
15 and I am stiffing it to something beneath me
16 dyed red hair, bad breath, blue teeth

17 I used to like Monet
18 I used to like Monet very much
19 it was funny, I thought, the way he did it
20 with colors

21 women are so expensive
22 dog leashes are expensive
23 I am going to start selling air in dark orange bags
24 marked: moon-blooms

25 I used to like bottles full of blood
26 young girls in camel-hair coats
27 Prince Valiant
28 Popeye's magic touch

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29 the struggle is in the struggle
30 like a corkscrew
31 a good man doesn't get cork in the wine

32 the thought has occurred to millions of men
33 while shaving
34 the removal of life might be preferred to
35 the removal of hair

36 spit out cotton and clean your rearview
37 mirror, run like you mean it, drunk jock,
38 the whores will win, the fools will win,
39 but break like a horse out of the gate.

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the crunch

1 too much
2 too little

3 too fat
4 too thin
5 or nobody.

6 laughter or
7 tears

8 haters
9 lovers

10 strangers with faces like
11 the backs of
12 thumb tacks

13 armies running through
14 streets of blood
15 waving winebottles
16 bayoneting and fucking
17 virgins.

18 or an old guy in a cheap room
19 with a photograph of M. Monroe.

20 there is a loneliness in this world so great
21 that you can see it in the slow movement of
22 the hands of a clock.

23 people so tired
24 mutilated
25 either by love or no love.

26 people just are not good to each other
27 one on one.

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28 the rich are not good to the rich
29 the poor are not good to the poor.

30 we are afraid.

31 our educational system tells us
32 that we can all be

33 big-ass winners.
34 it hasn't told us
35 about the gutters
36 or the suicides.
37 or the terror of one person
38 aching in one place
39 alone
40 untouched
41 unspoken to
42 watering a plant.
43 people are not good to each other.
44 people are not good to each other.
45 people are not good to each other.
46 I suppose they never will be.
47 I don't ask them to be.
48 but sometimes I think about
49 it.
50 the beads will swing
51 the clouds will cloud
52 and the killer will behead the child
53 like taking a bite out of an ice cream cone.
54 too much
55 too little

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56 too fat
57 too thin
58 or nobody
59 more haters than lovers.
60 people are not good to each other.
61 perhaps if they were
62 our deaths would not be so sad.
63 meanwhile I look at young girls
64 stems
65 flowers of chance.
66 there must be a way.
67 surely there must be a way we have not yet
68 thought of.
69 who put this brain inside of me?
70 it cries
71 it demands
72 it says that there is a chance.

73 it will not say
74 "no."

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a horse with greenblue eyes

1 what you see is what you see:
2 madhouses are rarely
3 on display.

4 that we still walk about and
5 scratch ourselves and light
6 cigarettes

7 is more the miracle

8 than bathing beauties
9 than roses and the moth.

10 to sit in a small room
11 and drink a can of beer
12 and roll a cigarette
13 while listening to Brahms
14 on a small red radio

15 is to have come back
16 from a dozen wars
17 alive

18 listening to the sound
19 of the refrigerator

20 as bathing beauties rot

21 and the oranges and apples
22 roll away.

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3
Scarlet

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Scarlet

1 I'm glad when they arrive
2 and I'm glad when they leave

3 I'm glad when I hear their heels
4 approaching my door
5 and I'm glad when those heels
6 walk away

7 I'm glad to fuck
8 I'm glad to care
9 and I'm glad when it's over

10 and

11 since it's always either
12 starting or finishing
13 I'm glad
14 most of the time

15 and the cats walk up and down
16 and the earth spins around the sun
17 and the phone rings:

18 "this is Scarlet."
19 "who?"
20 "Scarlet."
21 "o.k., get it on over."
22 and I hang up thinking
23 maybe this is it

24 go in
25 take a quick shit
26 shave

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27 bathe
28 dress

29 dump the sacks
30 and cartons of empty
31 bottles

32 sit down to the sound of
33 heels approaching
34 more an army approaching than
35 victory

36 it's Scarlet
37 and in my kitchen the faucet
38 keeps dripping
39 needs a washer.

40 I'll take care of it
41 later.

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red up and down

1 red hair
2 real
3 she whirled it
4 and she asked
5 "is my ass still on?"

6 such comedy.

7 there is always one woman

8 to save you from another
9 and as that woman saves you
10 she makes ready to
11 destroy.
12 "sometimes I hate you,"
13 she said.
14 she walked out and sat on
15 my porch and read my copy
16 of Catullus, she stayed out
17 there for an hour.
18 people walked up and down
19 past my place
20 wondering where such an ugly
21 old man could get
22 such beauty.
23 I didn't know either.
24 when she walked in I grabbed
25 her and pulled her to my lap.
26 I lifted my glass and told
27 her, "drink this."

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28 "oh," she said, "you've mixed
29 wine with Jim Beam, you're gonna
30 get nasty."
31 "you henna your hair, don't
32 you?"
33 "you don't look," she said and
34 stood up and pulled down her
35 slacks and panties and
36 the hair down there was the
37 same as the hair
38 up there.
39 Catullus himself couldn't have wished
40 for more historic or
41 wondrous grace;
42 then he went
43 goofy
44 for tender boys
45 not mad enough
46 to become
47 women.

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like a flower in the rain
1 I cut the middle fingernail of the middle
2 finger

3 right hand
4 real short
5 and I began rubbing along her cunt
6 as she sat upright in bed
7 spreading lotion over her arms
8 face
9 and breasts
10 after bathing.
11 then she lit a cigarette:
12 "don't let this put you off,"
13 and smoked and continued to rub the
14 lotion on.
15 I continued to rub the cunt.
16 "you want an apple?" I asked.
17 "sure," she said, "you got one?"
18 but I got to her---
19 she began to twist
20 then she rolled on her side,
21 she was getting wet and open
22 like a flower in the rain.
23 then she rolled on her stomach
24 and her most beautiful ass
25 looked up at me
26 and I reached under and got the
27 cunt again.
28 she reached around and got my
29 cock, she rolled and twisted,
30 I mounted
31 my face falling into the mass
32 of red hair that overflowed
33 from her head
34 and my fattened cock entered
35 into the miracle.

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36 later we joked about the lotion
37 and the cigarette and the apple.
38 then I went out and got some chicken
39 and shrimp and french fries and buns
40 and mashed potatoes and gravy and
41 cole slaw, and we ate. she told me
42 how good she felt and I told her
43 how good I felt and we ate
44 the chicken and the shrimp and the
45 french fries and the buns and the
46 mashed potatoes and the gravy and
47 the cole slaw too.

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light brown

1 light brown stare
2 that dumb blank marvelous
3 light brown stare
4 I'll take care of
5 it.

6 you needn't carry me
7 anymore
8 with your Cleopatra
9 movie star
10 tricks

11 do you realize
12 that if I were an adding machine
13 I might break down
14 tabulating
15 how many times you've used
16 that light brown stare?

17 not that you're not the best
18 with your light brown stare.

19 someday some crazy son of a bitch
20 is going to murder you

21 and you'll cry out my name
22 you'll finally know
23 what you should have known

24 so very long
25 ago.

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huge ear rings

1 I go to pick her up.
2 she's on some errand.
3 she always has errands
4 many things to do.
5 I have nothing to do.

6 she comes out of her apartment
7 I see her move toward my car

8 she is barefooted
9 dressed casually
10 except for huge ear rings.

11 I light a cigarette
12 and when I look up
13 she is stretched out on the street

14 a quite busy street

15 all 112 pounds of her
16 as beautiful as anything you might
17 imagine.

18 I switch on the radio
19 and wait for her to get up.

20 she does.

21 I flip the car door open.

22 she gets in. I drive away from the
23 curb. she likes the song on the radio
24 she turns the radio up.

25 she seems to like all the songs
26 she seems to know all the songs

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27 each time I see her she looks better
28 and better

29 200 years ago they would have burned her
30 at the stake

31 now she puts on her
32 mascara as we
33 drive along.

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she came out of the bathroom with her flaming red hair and said---

1 the cops want me to come down and identify
2 some guy who tried to rape me.
3 I've lost the key to my car again; I've got
4 the key to open the door but not the one
5 to start it.
6 those people are trying to take my child
7 away from me but I won't let them.
8 Rochelle almost o.d.'d, then she went at
9 Harry with something, and he punched her.
10 she's had those cracked ribs, you know,
11 and one of them punctured her lung. she's
12 down at the county under a machine.

13 where's my comb?
14 your comb has all that guck in it.

15 I told her,
16 I haven't seen your
17 comb.

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a killer

1 consistency is terrific:
2 shark-mouth
3 grubby interior with an
4 almost perfect body,
5 long blazing hair---
6 it confuses me
7 and others

8 she runs from man to man
9 offering endearments

10 she speaks of love

11 then breaks each man
12 to her will

13 shark-mouthed
14 grubby interior

15 we see it too late:
16 after the cock gets swallowed
17 the heart follows

18 her long blazing hair
19 her almost perfect body
20 walks down the street
21 as the same sun
22 falls upon flowers.

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longshot

1 she's not for you, man,
2 she's not your type,
3 she's erased
4 she's been used
5 she's got all the wrong
6 habits,
7 he told me
8 in between races.

9 I'm going to bet the 4
10 horse, I told him.
11 well, it's only that I'd
12 like to turn her around
13 in mid-stream,
14 save her, you might say.

15 you can't save her, he said,
16 you're 55, you need kindness.
17 I'm going to bet the 6 horse.
18 you're not the one to save
19 her.

20 who can save her? I asked.
21 I don't think the 6 has a
22 chance, I like the 4.

23 she needs somebody to beat her
24 from wall to wall, he said,
25 kick her ass, she'd love
26 it. she'd stay home and
27 wash the dishes.
28 the 6 horse will be in
29 the running.

30 I'm no good at beating women,
31 I said.

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32 forget her then, he said.

33 it's hard to, I said.
34 he got up and bet the 6
35 and I got up and bet the 4.
36 the 5 horse won
37 by 3 lengths
38 at 15 to one.
39 she's got red hair
40 like lightning from heaven,
41 I said.
42 forget her, he said.
43 we tore up our tickets
44 and stared at the lake
45 in the center of the track.
46 it was going to be
47 a long afternoon
48 for both of us.

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the promise

1 she bent over the side of the bed
2 and opened the portfolio
3 along the side of the wall.
4 we were drinking.
5 she said, "you promised me these
6 paintings once, don't you
7 remember?"
8 "what? no, no, I don't remember."
9 "well, you did," she said, "and you
10 ought to keep your promises."
11 "leave those fucking paintings alone,"
12 I said.
13 then I walked into the kitchen for
14 a beer. I paused to vomit
15 and when I came out
16 I saw her through my window
17 going down the court walk
18 toward her place in back.
19 she was trying to hurry
20 and balanced on top of her head
21 were 40 paintings:
22 oils
23 black and whites
24 acrylics
25 water colors.
26 she stumbled once and almost
27 fell on her ass.
28 then she ran up her steps
29 and was gone through her door
30 to her place upstairs
31 running with all those paintings
32 on top of her head.
33 it was one of the funniest damned

34 things I ever did see.

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35 well, I guess I'll just have to
36 paint 40 more.

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waving and waving goodbye

1 I paid this one's fare all the way from Houston
2 to San Francisco
3 then flew up to meet her at her brother's house
4 and I got drunk
5 and talked all night about a redhead, and
6 she finally said, "you sleep up there,"
7 and I climbed the ladder
8 up into a bunk and she slept
9 down there.

10 the next day they drove me to the airport
11 and I flew back, thinking, well,
12 there's still the redhead and when I got back in
13 I phoned the redhead and said, "I'm back, baby,
14 I flew up to see this woman and I talked about
15 you all night, so here I am ..."

16 "well, why don't you fly back up and finish
17 the job?" she said and hung up.

18 then I got drunk and the phone rang
19 and they said they were
20 two ladies from Germany and they'd like
21 to see me.

22 so they came over and one was 20 and the
23 other was 22. I told them that my heart
24 had been smashed for the last time and
25 that I was giving up women. they laughed
26 at me and we drank and smoked and went to
27 bed together.

28 I got this thing in front of me and
29 first I grabbed one and then I grabbed the
30 other.

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31 I finally settled on the 22 year old and
32 ate her up.

33 they stayed 2 days and 2 nights
34 but I never got to the 20 year old,
35 she was on tampax.

36 I finally drove them to Sherman Oaks
37 and they stood at the foot of a long
38 driveway
39 waving and waving goodbye as I backed

40 my Volks out.

41 when I got back there was a letter from a
42 lady in Eureka. she said that she wanted me
43 to fuck her until she couldn't
44 walk anymore.

45 I stretched out and whacked-off
46 thinking about a little girl I had seen
47 on a red bicycle about a week ago.

48 then I took a bath and put on my green
49 terrycloth robe just in time to get the fights
50 on tv from the Olympic.

51 there was a black and a Chicano in there.
52 that always made a good fight.

53 and it was a good idea too:
54 put them in there and let them kill each
55 other.

56 I watched the whole fight
57 thinking about the redhead all the time.

58 I think the Chicano won
59 but I'm not sure.

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liberty

1 she was sitting in the window
2 of room 1010 at the Chelsea
3 in New York,
4 Janis Joplin's old room.
5 it was 104 degrees
6 and she was on speed
7 and had one leg over
8 the sill,
9 and she leaned out and said,
10 "God, this is great!"
11 and then she slipped
12 and almost went out,
13 just catching herself.
14 it was very close.
15 she pulled herself in
16 walked over and stretched
17 on the bed.

18 I've lost a lot of women
19 in a lot of different ways
20 but that would have been
21 the first time
22 that way.

23 then she rolled off the bed
24 landed on her back
25 and when I walked over
26 she was asleep.

27 all day she had been wanting
28 to see the Statue of Liberty.
29 now she wouldn't worry me about that
30 for a while.

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don't touch the girls

1 she's up seeing my doctor
2 trying to get some diet pills;
3 she's not fat, she needs the speed.
4 I go down to the nearest bar and wait.
5 at 3:30 in the afternoon of a tuesday.
6 they have a dancer.

7 there's only one other man in the bar.

8 she works out
9 looking at herself in the mirror.
10 she's like a monkey
11 dark
12 Korean.

13 she's not very good,
14 skinny and obvious
15 and she sticks her tongue out at me
16 then at the other man.

17 times must be truly hard, I think.

18 I have a few more beers then get up to leave.
19 she waves me over.
20 "you go?" she asks.
21 "yes," I say, "my wife has cancer."

22 I shake her hand.

23 she points to a sign behind her:
24 DON'T TOUCH THE GIRLS.

25 she points to the sign and says,
26 "the sign says, 'DON'T TOUCH THE GIRLS'."

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27 I go back to the parking lot and wait.
28 she comes out.
29 "did you get the pills?" I ask.
30 "yes," she says.
31 "then it's been a successful day."

32 I think of the dancer walking across my
33 kitchen. I can't visualize it. I am going
34 to die alone
35 just the way I live.

36 "take me to my place," she says,
37 "I've got to get ready for night school."

38 "sure," I say and drive her on in.

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dark shades

1 I never wear dark shades
2 but this red head went to get
3 a prescription filled on Hollywood Blvd.
4 and she kept haggling and working at
5 me, snapping and snarling.
6 I left her at the prescription counter
7 and walked around and got a large tube of
8 Crest and a giant bottle of Joy.
9 then I walked up to
10 the dark shade display rack and bought
11 the most vicious pair of shades
12 I could find.
13 we paid for our things
14 walked down to a Mexican place
15 and she ordered a taco she couldn't eat
16 and sat there
17 haggling and snapping and snarling at me
18 and after eating I ordered 3 beers
19 drank them down
20 then put on my shades.
21 "o my God," she said, "o my God shit!"
22 and I ripped her up both sides
23 most excellent riposte
24 snarling stinking marmalade shots
25 shit blows
26 farts from hell,
27 then I got up
28 paid
29 she following me out
30 both of us in shades
31 and the sidewalks split.
32 we found her car
33 got in and drove off
34 me sitting there
35 pushing the shades back against my nose

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36 ripping out her backbone
37 and waving it out the window
38 like a broken Confederate flagpole ...
39 dark and vicious shades help.
40 "o my God shit!" she said,
41 and the sun was up
42 and I didn't know it.

43 they were a bargain for \$4.25
44 even though I had left the Crest
45 and the Joy behind
46 at the taco place.

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prayer in bad weather

1 by God, I don't know what to
2 do.
3 they're so nice to have around.
4 they have a way of playing with
5 the balls
6 and looking at the cock very
7 seriously
8 turning it
9 tweeking it
10 examining each part
11 as their long hair falls on
12 your belly.

13 it's not the fucking and sucking
14 alone that reaches into a man
15 and softens him, it's the extras,
16 it's all the extras.

17 now it's raining tonight
18 and there's nobody
19 they are elsewhere
20 examining things
21 in new bedrooms
22 in new moods
23 or maybe in old
24 bedrooms.

25 anyhow, it's raining tonight,
26 one hell of a dashing, pouring
27 rain....

28 very little to do.
29 I've read the newspaper
30 paid the gas bill
31 the electric co.
32 the phone bill.

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33 it keeps raining.

34 they soften a man
35 and then let him swim
36 in his own juice.

37 I need an old-fashioned whore
38 at the door tonight
39 closing her green umbrella,
40 drops of moonlit rain on her
41 purse, saying, "shit, man,
42 can't you get better music
43 than that on your radio?
44 and turn up the heat ..."

45 it's always when a man's swollen
46 with love and everything
47 else
48 that it keeps raining

49 splattering
50 flooding
51 rain
52 good for the trees and the
53 grass and the air ...
54 good for things that
55 live alone.

56 I would give anything
57 for a female's hand on me
58 tonight.
59 they soften a man and
60 then leave him
61 listening to the rain.

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melancholia

1 the history of melancholia
2 includes all of us.

3 me, I writhe in dirty sheets
4 while staring at blue walls
5 and nothing.

6 I have gotten so used to melancholia
7 that
8 I greet it like an old
9 friend.

10 I will now do 15 minutes of grieving
11 for the lost redhead,
12 I tell the gods.

13 I do it and feel quite bad
14 quite sad,
15 then I rise
16 CLEANSED
17 even though nothing is
18 solved.

19 that's what I get for kicking
20 religion in the ass.

21 I should have kicked the redhead
22 in the ass
23 where her brains and her bread and
24 butter are
25 at ...

26 but, no, I've felt sad
27 about everything:

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28 the lost redhead was just another
29 smash in a lifelong
30 loss ...

31 I listen to drums on the radio now
32 and grin.

33 there is something wrong with me
34 besides
35 melancholia.

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a stethoscope case

1 my doctor has just come into his office
2 from surgery.
3 he meets me in the men's john.
4 "God damn," he says to me,
5 "where did you find her? oh, I just like
6 to look at girls like that!"
7 I tell him: "it's my specialty: cement
8 hearts and beautiful bodies. If you can find
9 a heart-beat, let me know."
10 "I'll take good care of her," he says.
11 "yes, and please remember all the ethical
12 codes of your honorable profession," I tell
13 him.

14 he zips up first then washes.
15 "how's your health?" he asks.

16 "physically I'm sound as a tic. mentally I'm
17 wasted, doomed, on my tiny cross, all that
18 crap."

19 "I'll take good care of her."

20 "yes. and let me know about the heart-beat."

21 he walks out.
22 I finish, zip up and also walk out.
23 only I don't wash up.

24 I'm far beyond all that.

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eat your heart out

1 I've come by, she says, to tell you
2 that this is it. I'm not kidding, it's
3 over. this is it.

4 I sit on the couch watching her arrange
5 her long red hair before my bedroom
6 mirror.
7 she pulls her hair up and
8 piles it on top of her head---
9 she lets her eyes look at
10 my eyes---
11 then she drops the hair and
12 lets it fall down in front of her face.

13 we go to bed and I hold her
14 speechlessly from the back
15 my arm around her neck
16 I touch her wrists and hands
17 feel up to
18 her elbows
19 no further.

20 she gets up.

21 this is it, she says,
22 eat your heart out. you
23 got any rubber bands?

24 I don't know.

25 here's one, she says,
26 this will do. well,
27 I'm going.

28 I get up and walk her
29 to the door

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30 just as she leaves
31 she says,
32 I want you to buy me
33 some high-heeled shoes
34 with tall thin spikes,
35 black high-heeled shoes.
36 no, I want them
37 red.

38 I watch her walk down the cement walk
39 under the trees
40 she walks all right and
41 as the poinsettias drip in the sun
42 I close the door.

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the retreat

1 this time has finished me.

2 I feel like the German troops
3 whipped by snow and the communists
4 walking bent
5 with newspapers stuffed into
6 worn boots.

7 my plight is just as terrible.
8 maybe more so.

9 victory was so close
10 victory was there.

11 as she stood before my mirror
12 younger and more beautiful than

13 any woman I had ever known
14 combing yards and yards of red hair
15 as I watched her.

16 and when she came to bed
17 she was more beautiful than ever
18 and the love was very very good.

19 eleven months.

20 now she's gone
21 gone as they go.

22 this time has finished me.

23 it's a long road back

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24 and back to where?

25 the guy ahead of me
26 falls.

27 I step over him.

28 did she get him too?

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I made a mistake

1 I reached up into the top of the closet
2 and took out a pair of blue panties
3 and showed them to her and
4 asked "are these yours?"

5 and she looked and said,
6 "no, those belong to a dog."

7 she left after that and I haven't seen
8 her since. she's not at her place.
9 I keep going there, leaving notes stuck
10 into the door. I go back and the notes
11 are still there. I take the Maltese cross
12 cut it down from my car mirror, tie it
13 to her doorknob with a shoelace, leave
14 a book of poems.
15 when I go back the next night everything
16 is still there.

17 I keep searching the streets for that
18 blood-wine battleship she drives
19 with a weak battery, and the doors
20 hanging from broken hinges.

21 I drive around the streets
22 an inch away from weeping,
23 ashamed of my sentimentality and
24 possible love.

25 a confused old man driving in the rain
26 wondering where the good luck
27 went.

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4
popular melodies
in the last of
your mind

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girls in pantyhose

1 schoolgirls in pantyhose
2 sitting on bus stop benches
3 looking tired at 13
4 with their raspberry lipstick.
5 it's hot in the sun
6 and the day at school has been
7 dull, and going home is
8 dull, and
9 I drive by in my car
10 peering at their warm legs.
11 their eyes look
12 away---
13 they've been warned
14 about ruthless and horny old
15 studs; they're just not going
16 to give it away like that.
17 and yet it's dull
18 waiting out the minutes on
19 the bench and the years at
20 home, and the books they
21 carry are dull and the food
22 they eat is dull, and even
23 the ruthless, horny old studs
24 are dull.

25 the girls in pantyhose wait,
26 they await the proper time and
27 moment, and then they will move
28 and then they will conquer.

29 I drive around in my car
30 peeking up their legs
31 pleased that I will never be
32 part of their heaven and
33 their hell. but that scarlet

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34 lipstick on those sad waiting
35 mouths! it would be nice to
36 kiss each of them once, fully,
37 then give them back.
38 but the bus will
39 get them first.

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up your yellow river

1 a woman told a man
2 when he got off a plane
3 that I was dead.
4 a magazine printed
5 the fact that I was dead
6 and somebody else said
7 that they'd heard that I
8 was dead, and then somebody
9 wrote an article and said
10 our Rimbaud our Villon is
11 dead. at the same time an old
12 drinking buddy published
13 a piece stating that I
14 could no longer write. a
15 real Judas job. they can't
16 wait for me to go, these
17 farts. well, I'm listening
18 to Tchaikovsky's piano
19 concerto number one and
20 the announcer said Mahler's
21 5th and 10th symphonies
22 are coming up via
23 Amsterdam,
24 and the beerbottles are
25 on the floor and ash
26 from my cigarettes
27 covers my cotton under-
28 wear and my gut, I've
29 told all my girlfriends to
30 go to hell, and even this
31 is a better poem than any
32 of those gravediggers
33 could write.

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artists:

1 she wrote me for years.
2 "I'm drinking wine in the kitchen.
3 it's raining outside. the children
4 are in school."

5 she was an average citizen
6 worried about her soul, her typewriter
7 and her
8 underground poetry reputation.

9 she wrote fairly well and with honesty
10 but only long after others had
11 broken the road ahead.

12 she'd phone me drunk at 2 a.m.
13 at 3 a.m.
14 while her husband slept.

15 "it's good to hear your voice," she'd
16 say.

17 "it's good to hear your voice too," I'd
18 say.

19 what the hell, you
20 know.

21 she finally came down. I think it had
22 something to do with
23 The Chapparal Poets Society of California.
24 they had to elect officers. she phoned me
25 from their hotel.

26 "I'm here," she said, "we're going to elect
27 officers."

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28 "o.k., fine," I said, "get some good ones."
29 I hung up.

30 the phone rang again.
31 "hey, don't you want to see me?"

32 "sure," I said, "what's the address?"

33 after she said goodbye I jacked-off
34 changed my stockings
35 drank a half bottle of wine and
36 drove on out.

37 they were all drunk and trying to
38 fuck each other.

39 I drove her back to my place.

40 she had on pink panties with
41 ribbons.

42 we drank some beer and
43 smoked and talked about
44 Ezra Pound, then we
45 slept.

46 it's no longer clear to
47 me whether I drove her to
48 the airport or
49 not.

50 she still writes letters
51 and I answer each one
52 viciously
53 hoping to make her
54 stop.

55 someday she may luck into

56 fame like Erica

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57 Jong. (her face is not as good
58 but her body is better)
59 and I'll think,
60 my God, what have I done?
61 I blew it.
62 or rather: I didn't blow
63 it.

64 meanwhile I have her box number
65 and I'd better inform her
66 that my second novel will be out
67 in September.
68 that ought to keep her nipples hard
69 while I consider the possibility of
70 Francine du Plessix Gray.

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I have shit stains in my underwear too

1 I hear them outside:
2 "does he always type this
3 late?"
4 "no, it's very unusual."
5 "he shouldn't type this
6 late."
7 "he hardly ever does."
8 "does he drink?"
9 "I think he does."
10 "he went to the mailbox in
11 his underwear yesterday."
12 "I saw him too."
13 "he doesn't have any friends."
14 "he's old."
15 "he shouldn't type this late."

16 they go inside and it begins
17 to rain as
18 3 gun shots sound half a block
19 away and
20 one of the skyscrapers in
21 downtown L.A. begins
22 burning
23 25 foot flames licking toward
24 doom.

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Hawley's leaving town

1 this guy
2 he's got a crazy eye
3 and he's brown
4 a dark brown from the sun
5 the Hollywood and Western sun
6 the racetrack sun

7 he sees me and he says,
8 "hey, Hawley's leaving town
9 for a week. he messes up
10 my handicapping. now
11 I've got a chance."

12 he's grinning, he means it:
13 with Hawley out of town
14 he's going to move toward
15 that castle in the Hollywood Hills;
16 dancing girls
17 six German Shepherds
18 a drawbridge,
19 ten year old
20 wine.

21 Sam the Whorehouse Man
22 walks up and I tell Sam that
23 I am clearing \$150 a day
24 at the track.
25 "I work right off the
26 toteboard," I tell him.
27 "I need a girl," he tells me,
28 "who can belt-buckle a guy
29 without coming out with all
30 this Christian moral bullshit
31 afterwards."

32 "Hawley's leaving town,"
33 I tell Sam.

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34 "where's the Shoe?"
35 he asks.
36 "back east," says an old man
37 who's standing there.
38 he has a white plastic shield
39 over his left eye
40 with little holes
41 punched into it.

42 "that leaves it all to Pinky,"
43 says dark brown.

44 we all stand looking at each
45 other.
46 then
47 a silent signal given
48 we turn away
49 and start walking,
50 each
51 in a different direction:
52 north south east west.

53 we know something.

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an unkind poem

1 they go on writing
2 pumping out poems---
3 young boys and college professors
4 wives who drink wine all afternoon
5 while their husbands work,
6 they go on writing
7 the same names in the same magazines
8 everybody writing a little worse each year,
9 getting out a poetry collection
10 and pumping out more poems
11 it's like a contest
12 it is a contest
13 but the prize is invisible.

14 they won't write short stories or articles
15 or novels
16 they just go on
17 pumping out poems
18 each sounding more and more like the others
19 and less and less like themselves,
20 and some of the young boys weary and quit
21 but the professors never quit
22 and the wives who drink wine in the afternoons
23 never ever ever quit
24 and new young boys arrive with new magazines
25 and there is some correspondence with lady or men
poets
26 and some fucking
27 and everything is exaggerated and dull.

28 when the poems come back
29 they retype them
30 and send them off to the next magazine on the list,
31 and they give readings
32 all the readings they can
33 for free most of the time

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34 hoping that somebody will finally know
35 finally applaud them
36 finally congratulate and recognize their
37 talent
38 they are all so sure of their genius
39 there is so little self-doubt,
40 and most of them live in North Beach or New York City,

41 and their faces are like their poems:
42 alike,
43 and they know each other and
44 gather and hate and admire and choose and discard
45 and keep pumping out more poems
46 more poems
47 more poems
48 the contest of the dullards:
49 tap tap tap, tap tap, tap tap tap, tap tap ...

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the bee

1 I suppose like any other boy
2 I had one best friend in the neighborhood.
3 his name was Eugene and he was bigger
4 than I was and one year older.
5 Eugene used to whip me pretty good.
6 we fought all the time.
7 I kept trying him but without much
8 success.

9 once we leaped off a garage roof together
10 to prove our guts.
11 I twisted my ankle and he came up clean
12 as freshly-wrapped butter.

13 I guess the only good thing he ever did for me
14 was when the bee stung me while I was barefoot
15 and while I sat down and pulled the stinger out
16 he said,
17 "I'll get the son of a bitch!"

18 and he did
19 with a tennis racket
20 plus a rubber hammer.

21 it was all right
22 they say they die
23 anyway.

24 my foot swelled up double-size
25 and I stayed in bed
26 praying for death

27 and Eugene went on to become an
28 Admiral or a Commander
29 or something large in the United States Navy

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30 and he passed through one or two wars
31 without injury.

32 I imagine him an old man now
33 in a rocking chair
34 with his false teeth
35 and glass of buttermilk ...

36 while drunk
37 I fingerfuck this 19 year old groupie
38 in bed with me.

39 but the worst part is
40 (like jumping off the garage roof)
41 Eugene wins again
42 because he's not even thinking
43 about me.

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the most

1 here comes the fishhead singing
2 here comes the baked potato in drag

3 here comes nothing to do all day long
4 here comes another night of no sleep

5 here comes the phone ringing the wrong tone

6 here comes a termite with a banjo
7 here comes a flagpole with blank eyes
8 here comes a cat and a dog wearing nylons

9 here comes a machinegun singing
10 here comes bacon burning in the pan
11 here comes a voice saying something dull

12 here comes a newspaper stuffed with small red birds
13 with flat brown beaks

14 here comes a cunt carrying a torch
15 a grenade
16 a deathly love

17 here comes victory carrying
18 one bucket of blood
19 and stumbling over the berrybush

20 and the sheets hang out the windows

21 and the bombers head east west north south
22 get lost
23 get tossed like salad

24 as all the fish in the sea line up and form
25 one line

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26 one long line
27 one very long thin line
28 the longest line you could ever imagine

29 and we get lost
30 walking past purple mountains

31 we walk lost
32 bare at last like the knife

33 having given
34 having spit it out like an unexpected olive seed

35 as the girl at the call service
36 screams over the phone:
37 "don't call back! you sound like a jerk!"

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ah ...

1 drinking German beer
2 and trying to come up with
3 the immortal poem at
4 5 p.m. in the afternoon.
5 but, ah, I've told the
6 students that the thing
7 to do is not to try.

8 but when the women aren't
9 around and the horses aren't
10 running
11 what else is there to do?

12 I've had a couple of
13 sexual fantasies
14 had lunch out
15 mailed three letters
16 been to the grocery store.
17 nothing on tv.
18 the telephone is quiet.
19 I've run dental floss
20 between my teeth.

21 it won't rain and I listen
22 to the early arrivals from the
23 8 hour day as they
24 drive in and park their cars
25 behind the apartment
26 next door.

27 I sit drinking German beer
28 and trying to come up with the
29 big one
30 and I'm not going to make it.
31 I'm just going to keep drinking

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32 more and more German beer
33 and rolling smokes
34 and by 11 p.m.
35 I'll be spread out
36 on the unmade bed
37 face up
38 asleep under the electric
39 light
40 still waiting on the immortal
41 poem.

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the girl on the bus stop bench

1 I saw her when I was in the left lane
2 going east on Sunset.
3 she was sitting
4 with her legs crossed
5 reading a paperback.
6 she was Italian or Indian or

7 Greek
8 and I was stopped at a red signal
9 as now and then a wind
10 would lift her skirt,
11 I was directly across from her
12 looking in,
13 and such perfect immaculate legs
14 I had never seen.
15 I am essentially bashful
16 but I stared and kept staring
17 until the person in the car behind
18 me honked.

19 it had never happened quite like that
20 before.
21 I drove around the block
22 and parked in the supermarket
23 lot
24 directly across from her
25 in my dark shades
26 I kept staring
27 like a schoolboy in his first
28 excitement.

29 I memorized her shoes
30 her dress
31 her stockings
32 her face.

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33 cars came by and blocked my
34 view.
35 then I saw her again.
36 the wind flipped her skirt
37 high along her thighs
38 and I began rubbing myself.
39 just before her bus came
40 I climaxed.
41 I smelled my sperm
42 felt it wet against my shorts
43 and pants.

44 it was an ugly white bus
45 and it took her away.

46 I backed out of the parking lot
47 thinking, I'm a peep-freak
48 but at least I didn't expose
49 myself.

50 I'm a peep-freak
51 but why do they do that?
52 why do they look like that?
53 why do they let the wind do
54 that?

55 when I got home
56 I undressed and bathed
57 got out

58 toweled
59 turned on
60 the news
61 turned off the news
62 and
63 wrote this poem.

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I'm getting back to where I was

1 I used to take the back off
2 the telephone and stuff it with rags
3 and when somebody knocked
4 I wouldn't answer and if they persisted
5 I'd tell them in terms vulgar
6 to vanish.

7 just another old crank
8 with wings of gold
9 flabby white belly
10 plus
11 eyes to knock out
12 the sun.

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a lovely couple

1 I had to take a shit
2 but instead I went
3 into this shop to
4 have a key made.
5 the woman was dressed
6 in gingham and smelled
7 like a muskrat.
8 "Ralph," she hollered
9 and an old swine in a
10 flowered shirt and
11 size 6 shoes, her
12 husband, came out and
13 she said, " this man
14 wants a key."
15 he started grinding
16 as if he really didn't
17 want to.
18 there were slinking
19 shadows and urine
20 in the air.
21 I moved along the
22 glass counter,
23 pointed and called
24 to her,
25 "here, I want this
26 one.
27 she handed it to
28 me: a switchblade
29 in a light purple
30 case.
31 \$6.50 plus tax.

32 the key cost
33 practically
34 nothing.
35 I got my change and

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36 walked out on
37 the street.
38 sometimes you need
39 people like that.

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the strangest sight you ever did see---

1 I had this room in front on DeLongpre
2 and I used to sit for hours
3 in the daytime
4 looking out the front
5 window.
6 there were any number of girls who would
7 walk by
8 swaying;
9 it helped my afternoons,
10 added something to the beer and the
11 cigarettes.

12 one day I saw something
13 extra.
14 I heard the sound of it first.
15 "come on, push!" he said.
16 there was a long board
17 about 2? feet wide and
18 8 feet long;
19 nailed to the ends and in the middle
20 were roller skates.
21 he was pulling in front
22 two long ropes attached to the board
23 and she was in back
24 guiding and also pushing.
25 all their possessions were tied to the
26 board:
27 pots, pans, bedquilts, and so forth
28 were roped to the board
29 tied down;
30 and the skatewheels were grinding.

31 he was white, red-necked, a
32 southerner---

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33 thin, slumped, his pants about to
34 fall from his
35 ass---
36 his face pinked by the sun and
37 cheap wine,
38 and she was black
39 and walked upright

40 pushing;
41 she was simply beautiful
42 in turban
43 long green ear rings
44 yellow dress
45 from
46 neck to
47 ankle.
48 her face was gloriously
49 indifferent.

50 "don't worry!" he shouted, looking back
51 at her, "somebody will
52 rent us a place!"

53 she didn't answer.

54 then they were gone
55 although I still heard the
56 skatewheels.

57 they're going to make it,
58 I thought.

59 I'm sure they
60 did.

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in a neighborhood of murder

1 the roaches spit out
2 paperclips
3 and the helicopter circles and circles
4 smelling for blood
5 searchlights leering down into our
6 bedroom

7 5 guys in this court have pistols
8 another a
9 machete
10 we are all murderers and
11 alcoholics
12 but there are worse in the hotel
13 across the street
14 they sit in the green and white doorway
15 banal and depraved
16 waiting to be institutionalized

17 here we each have a small green plant
18 in the window
19 and when we fight with our women at 3 a.m.
20 we speak
21 softly
22 and on each porch
23 is a small dish of food
24 always eaten by morning
25 we presume
26 by the
27 cats.

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private first class

1 they took my man off the street
2 the other day
3 he wore an L.A. Rams sweatshirt with
4 the sleeves cut
5 off
6 and under that
7 an army shirt
8 private first class
9 and he wore a green beret
10 walked very straight
11 he was black in brown walking shorts
12 hair dyed blonde
13 he never bothered anybody
14 he stole a few babies
15 and ran off cackling
16 but he always returned the infants
17 unharmed
18 he slept in the back of the
19 Love Parlor
20 the girls let him.
21 compassion is found in
22 strange places.

23 one day I didn't see him
24 then another.
25 I asked around.

26 my taxes are going to go up
27 again. the state's got to
28 house and feed
29 him. the cops took him
30 in. no
31 good.

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love is a dog from hell

1 feet of cheese
2 coffeepot soul
3 hands that hate poolsticks
4 eyes like paperclips
5 I prefer red wine
6 I am bored on airliners
7 I am docile during earthquakes
8 I am sleepy at funerals
9 I puke at parades
10 and am sacrificial at chess
11 and cunt and caring
12 I smell urine in churches
13 I can no longer read
14 I can no longer sleep

15 eyes like paperclips
16 my green eyes

17 I prefer white wine
18 my box of rubbers is getting
19 stale
20 I take them out
21 Trojan-Enz
22 lubricated
23 for greater sensitivity
24 I take them out
25 and put three of them on

26 the walls of my bedroom are blue

27 Linda where did you go?
28 Katherine where did you go?
29 (and Nina went to England)

30 I have toenail clippers
31 and Windex glass cleaner

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32 green eyes
33 blue bedroom
34 bright machinegun sun

35 this whole thing is like a seal
36 caught on oily rocks
37 and circled by the Long Beach Marching Band
38 at 3:36 p.m.

39 there is a ticking behind me
40 but no clock
41 I feel something crawling along
42 the left side of my nose:
43 memories of airliners

44 my mother had false teeth
45 my father had false teeth
46 and every Saturday of their lives
47 they took up all the rugs in their house
48 waxed the hardwood floors
49 and covered them with rugs again

50 and Nina is in England
51 and Irene is on ATD
52 and I take my green eyes
53 and lay down in my blue bedroom.

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my groupie

1 I read last Saturday in the
2 redwoods outside of Santa Cruz
3 and I was about 3/4's finished
4 when I heard a long high scream
5 and a quite attractive
6 young girl came running toward me
7 long gown & divine eyes of fire

8 and she leaped up on the stage
9 and screamed: "I WANT YOU!
10 I WANT YOU! TAKE ME! TAKE
11 ME!"
12 I told her, "look, get the hell
13 away from me."
14 but she kept tearing at my
15 clothing and throwing herself
16 at me.
17 "where were you," I
18 asked her, "when I was living
19 on one candy bar a day and
20 sending short stories to the
21 Atlantic Monthly?"
22 she grabbed my balls and almost
23 twisted them off. her kisses
24 tasted like shitsoup.
25 2 women jumped up on the stage
26 and
27 carried her off into the
28 woods.
29 I could still hear her screams
30 as I began the next poem.

31 maybe, I thought, I should have
32 taken her on the stage in front
33 of all those eyes.

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34 but one can never be sure
35 whether it's good poetry or
36 bad acid.

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now, if you were teaching creative writing, he asked, what would
you tell them?

1 I'd tell them to have an unhappy love
2 affair, hemorrhoids, bad teeth
3 and to drink cheap wine,
4 avoid opera and golf and chess,
5 to keep switching the head of their
6 bed from wall to wall
7 and then I'd tell them to have
8 another unhappy love affair
9 and never to use a silk typewriter
10 ribbon,
11 avoid family picnics
12 or being photographed in a rose
13 garden;
14 read Hemingway only once,
15 skip Faulkner
16 ignore Gogol
17 stare at photos of Gertrude Stein
18 and read Sherwood Anderson in bed
19 while eating Ritz crackers,
20 realize that people who keep
21 talking about sexual liberation

22 are more frightened than you are.
23 listen to E. Power Biggs work the
24 organ on your radio while you're
25 rolling Bull Durham in the dark
26 in a strange town
27 with one day left on the rent
28 after having given up
29 friends, relatives and jobs.
30 never consider yourself superior and/
31 or fair
32 and never try to be.
33 have another unhappy love affair.

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34 watch a fly on a summer curtain.
35 never try to succeed.
36 don't shoot pool.
37 be righteously angry when you
38 find your car has a flat tire.
39 take vitamins but don't lift weights or jog.

40 then after all this
41 reverse the procedure.
42 have a good love affair.
43 and the thing
44 you might learn
45 is that nobody knows anything---
46 not the State, nor the mice
47 the garden hose or the North Star.
48 and if you ever catch me
49 teaching a creative writing class
50 and you read this back to me
51 I'll give you a straight A
52 right up the pickle
53 barrel.

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the good life

1 a house with 7 or 8 people
2 living in it
3 getting up the rent.
4 there's a stereo never used
5 and a set of bongos
6 never used
7 and there are rugs over the
8 windows
9 and you smoke
10 as the living roaches
11 stumble over buttons on your
12 shirt and tumble
13 off.

14 it's dark and somebody sends
15 out for food. you eat the food
16 and sleep. everybody sleeps at
17 once: on floors, coffeetables,
18 couches, beds, in bathtubs. there's

19 even one in the brush outside.
20 then somebody wakes up and
21 says, "come on, let's roll
22 one!"
23 a few others wake up.
24 "sure. yea. o.k."
25 "all right. come on, somebody
26 roll a couple. let's get it
27 on!"
28 "yeah! let's get it on!"
29 we smoke a few joints and then
30 we're asleep again

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31 except we reverse positions:
32 bathtub to couch, coffeetable to
33 rug, bed to floor, and a new one
34 falls into the brush
35 outside, and they haven't yet
36 found Patty Hearst and Tim doesn't
37 want to speak to
38 Allan.

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the Greek

1 the guy in the front court can't
2 speak English, he's Greek, a
3 rather stupid-looking and
4 fairly ugly man.
5 now my landlord does some painting,
6 it's not very good.
7 he showed the Greek one of his paintings.
8 the Greek went out and purchased
9 paper, brushes, paints.
10 the Greek started painting in his front
11 court. he leaves the paintings outside to
12 dry.
13 the Greek had never painted before---
14 here it comes:
15 a blue guitar
16 a street
17 a horse.
18 he's good
19 in his mid-forties he's
20 good.
21 he's found a

22 toy.
23 he's happy
24 now.

25 then I think, I wonder if he will get
26 very good?
27 and I wonder if I will have to watch
28 the rest?

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29 the glory and the women and the women and
30 the women and the women and
31 the decay.

32 I can almost smell the bloodsuckers forming
33 to the left.

34 you see,
35 I have fastened to him already.

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my comrades

1 this one teaches
2 that one lives with his mother.
3 and that one is supported by a red-faced alcoholic
father
4 with the brain of a gnat.
5 this one takes speed and has been supported by
6 the same woman for 14 years.
7 that one writes a novel every ten days
8 but at least pays his own rent.
9 this one goes from place to place
10 sleeping on couches, drinking and making his
11 spiel.
12 this one prints his own books on a duplicating
13 machine.
14 that one lives in an abandoned shower room
15 in a Hollywood hotel.
16 this one seems to know how to get grant after grant,
17 his life is a filling-out of forms.
18 this one is simply rich and lives in the best
19 places while knocking on the best doors.
20 that one had breakfast with William Carlos
21 Williams.
22 and this one teaches.
23 and that one teaches.
24 and this one puts out textbooks on how to do it
25 and speaks in a cruel and dominating voice.

26 they are everywhere.
27 everybody is a writer.
28 and almost every writer is a poet.
29 poets poets poets poets poets poets
30 poets poets poets poets poets poets

31 the next time the phone rings
32 it will be a poet.

33 the next person at the door

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34 will be a poet.
35 this one teaches
36 and that one lives with his mother
37 and that one is writing the story of
38 Ezra Pound.
39 oh, brothers, we are the sickest and the
40 lowest of the breed.

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soul

1 oh, how worried they are about my
2 soul!
3 I get letters
4 the phone rings ...
5 "are you going to be all right?"
6 they ask.
7 "I'll be all right," I tell them.
8 "I've seen so many go down the drain,"
9 they tell me.
10 "don't worry about me," I say.

11 yet, they make me nervous.
12 I go in and take a shower
13 come out and squeeze a pimple on my
14 nose.
15 then I go into the kitchen and make
16 a salami and ham sandwich.
17 I used to live on candy bars.
18 now I have imported German mustard
19 for my sandwich. I might be in danger
20 at that.

21 the phone keeps ringing and the letters keep
22 arriving.

23 if you live in a closet with rats and
24 eat dry bread
25 they like you.
26 you're a genius
27 then.

28 or if you're in the madhouse or
29 the drunktank
30 they call you a genius.

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31 or if you're drunk and shouting
32 obscenities and
33 vomiting your life-guts on
34 the floor
35 you're a genius.

36 but get the rent paid up a month in

37 advance
38 put on a new pair of stockings
39 go to the dentist
40 make love to a healthy clean girl
41 instead of a whore
42 and you've lost your
43 soul.

44 I'm not interested enough to ask about
45 their souls.
46 I suppose I
47 should.

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a change of habit

1 Shirley came to town with a broken leg
2 and met the Chicano who smoked
3 long slim cigars
4 and they got a place together
5 on Beacon street
6 5th floor;
7 the leg didn't get in the way
8 too much and
9 they watched television together
10 and Shirley cooked, on her
11 crutches and all;
12 there was a cat, Bogey,
13 and they had some friends
14 and talked about sports and Richard Nixon
15 and how the hell to
16 make it.
17 it worked for some months,
18 Shirley even got the cast off,
19 and the Chicano, Manuel,
20 got a job at the Biltmore,
21 Shirley sewed all the buttons back on
22 Manuel's shirts, mended and matched his
23 socks, then
24 one day Manuel returned to the place, and
25 she was gone---
26 no argument, no note, just
27 gone, all her clothes
28 all her stuff, and
29 Manuel sat by the window and looked out
30 and didn't make his job
31 the next day or the
32 next day or
33 the day after, he
34 didn't phone in, he
35 lost his job, got a

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36 ticket for parking, smoked
37 four hundred and sixty cigarettes, got
38 picked up for common drunk, bailed
39 out, went
40 to court and pleaded

41 guilty.
42 when the rent was up he
43 moved from Beacon street, he
44 left the cat and went to live with
45 his brother and
46 they'd get drunk
47 every night
48 and talk about how
49 terrible
50 life was.

51 Manuel never again smoked
52 long slim cigars
53 because Shirley always said
54 how
55 handsome he looked
56 when he did.

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\$\$\$\$\$\$

1 I've always had trouble with
2 money.
3 this one place I worked
4 everybody ate hot dogs
5 and potato chips
6 in the company cafeteria for
7 3 days before each
8 payday.
9 I wanted steaks,
10 I even went to see the manager
11 of the cafeteria and
12 demanded that he serve
13 steaks. he refused.
14 I'd forget payday.
15 I had a high rate of absenteeism and
16 payday would arrive and everybody would
17 start talking about
18 it.
19 "payday?" I'd say, "hell, is this
20 payday? I forgot to pick up my
21 last cheek ..."
22 "stop the bullshit, man ..."
23 "no, no, I mean it ..."
24 I'd jump up and go down to payroll
25 and sure enough there'd be a
26 check and I'd come back and show it
27 to them. "Jesus Christ, I forgot all about
28 it ..."
29 for some reason they'd get
30 angry. then the payroll clerk would come

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31 around. I'd have two
32 checks. "Jesus," I'd say, "two checks."
33 and they were
34 angry.
35 some of them were working
36 two jobs.

37 the worst day
38 it was raining very hard,
39 I didn't have a raincoat so
40 I put on a very old coat I hadn't worn for
41 months and
42 I walked in a little late
43 while they were working.
44 I looked in the coat for some
45 cigarettes
46 and found a 5 dollar bill
47 in the side pocket:
48 "hey, look," I said, "I just found a 5 dollar
49 bill I didn't know I had, that's
50 funny."

51 "hey, man, knock off the
52 shit!"

53 "no, no, I'm serious, really, I remember
54 wearing this coat when
55 I got drunk at the
56 bars. I've been rolled too often,
57 I've got this fear ... I take money out of
58 my wallet and hide it all
59 over me."

60 "sit down and get to
61 work."

62 I reached into an inside pocket:
63 "hey, look, here's a TWENTY! God, here's a
64 TWENTY I never knew I

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65 had! I'm
66 RICH!"

67 "you're not funny, son of
68 a bitch ..."

69 "hey, my God, here's ANOTHER
70 twenty! too much, too too
71 much ... I knew I didn't spend all that
72 money that night. I thought I'd been
73 rolled again ..."

74 I kept searching the
75 coat. "hey! here's a ten and
76 here's a fiver! my God ..."

77 "listen, I'm telling you to sit down

78 and shut up ..."
79 "my God, I'm RICH ... I don't even need
80 this job ..."
81 "man, sit down ..."
82 I found another ten after I sat down
83 but I didn't say
84 anything.
85 I could feel waves of hatred and
86 I was confused,
87 they believed I had
88 plotted the whole thing
89 just to make them
90 feel bad. I didn't want
91 to. people who live on hot dogs and
92 potato chips for
93 3 days before payday
94 feel bad
95 enough.

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96 I sat down
97 leaned forward and
98 began to go to
99 work.
100 outside
101 it continued to
102 rain.

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sitting in a sandwich joint

1 my daughter is most
2 glorious.
3 we are eating a take-
4 out snack in my car
5 in Santa Monica.
6 I say, "hey, kid,
7 my life has been
8 good, so good."
9 she looks at me.
10 I put my head down
11 on the steering wheel,
12 shudder, then I
13 kick the door open,
14 put on a
15 mock-puke.
16 I straighten up.
17 she laughs
18 biting into her
19 sandwich.
20 I pick up four
21 french fries
22 put them into my mouth,
23 chew them.

24 it's 5:30 p.m.
25 and the cars run up
26 and down past us.
27 I sneak a look:
28 we've got all the
29 luck we need:
30 her eyes are brilliant with the
31 remainder of the
32 day, and she's
33 grinning.

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doom and siesta time

1 my friend is worried about dying
2 he lives in Frisco
3 I live in L.A.
4 he goes to the gym and
5 works with the iron and hits
6 the big bag.
7 old age diminishes him.
8 he can't drink because of
9 his liver.
10 he can do
11 50 pushups.
12 he writes me
13 letters
14 telling me
15 that I'm the only one
16 who listens to him.
17 sure, Hal, I answer him
18 on a postcard.
19 but I don't want to pay
20 all those gym fees.
21 I go to bed
22 with a liverwurst and
23 onion sandwich at
24 one p.m.
25 after I eat I
26 nap

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27 with the heli-
28 copters and vultures
29 circling over my
30 sagging mattress.

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as crazy as I ever was

1 drunk and writing poems
2 at 3 a.m.

3 what counts now
4 is one more
5 tight
6 pussy

7 before the light
8 tilts out

9 drunk and writing poems
10 at 3:15 a.m.

11 some people tell me that I'm
12 famous.

13 what am I doing alone
14 drunk and writing poems at
15 3:18 a.m.?

16 I'm as crazy as I ever was
17 they don't understand
18 that I haven't stopped hanging out of 4th floor
19 windows by my heels---
20 I still do
21 right now
22 sitting here

23 writing this down
24 I am hanging by my heels
25 floors up:
26 68, 72, 101,
27 the feeling is the
28 same:

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29 relentless
30 unheroic and
31 necessary

32 sitting here
33 drunk and writing poems
34 at 3:24 a.m.

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sex

1 I am driving down Wilton Avenue
2 when this girl of about 15
3 dressed in tight blue jeans
4 that grip her behind like two hands
5 steps out in front of my car
6 I stop to let her cross the street
7 and as I watch her contours waving

8 she looks directly through my windshield
9 at me
10 with purple eyes
11 and then blows
12 out of her mouth
13 the largest pink globe of
14 bubble gum
15 I have ever seen
16 while I am listening to Beethoven
17 on the car radio.
18 she enters a small grocery store
19 and is gone
20 and I am left with
21 Ludwig.

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dead now

1 I always wanted to ball
2 Henry Miller, she said,
3 but by the time I got there
4 it was too late.

5 damn it, I said, you girls
6 always arrive too late.
7 I've already masturbated
8 twice today.

9 that wasn't his problem,
10 she said. by the way,
11 how come you flog-off
12 so much?

13 it's the space, I said,
14 all that space between
15 poems and stories, it's
16 intolerable.

17 you should wait, she said,
18 you're impatient.

19 what do you think of Celine?
20 I asked.

21 I wanted to ball him too.

22 dead now, I said.

23 dead now, she said.

24 care to hear a little
25 music? I asked.

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26 might as well, she said.
27 I gave her Ives.

28 that's all I had left
29 that night.

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twins

1 hey, said my friend, I want you to meet
2 Hangdog Harry, he reminds me of you,
3 and I said, all right, and we went to
4 this cheap hotel.
5 old men sitting around watching
6 some program on the tv in the lobby
7 as we went up the stairway
8 to 209 and there was Hangdog
9 sitting in a straight strawback chair
10 bottle of wine at his feet
11 last year's calendar on the wall,
12 "you guys sit down," he said,
13 "that's the problem:
14 man's inhumanity to man."
15 we watched him slowly roll a
16 Bull Durham cigarette.
17 "I've got a 17 inch neck and I'll kill
18 anybody who fucks with me."
19 he licked his cigarette
20 then spit on the rug.
21 "just like home here. feel free."

22 "how you feeling, Hangdog?" asked
23 my friend.

24 "terrible. I'm in love with a whore,
25 haven't seen her in 3 or 4 weeks."

26 "what you think she's doing, Hang?"

27 "well, right now about now I'd say
28 she's sucking some turkeyneck."

29 he picked up his wine bottle
30 took a tremendous drain.

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31 "look," my friend said to Hangdog,
32 "we've got to get going."

33 "o.k., time and tide, they don't
34 wait ..."

35 he looked at me:
36 "whatcha say your name was?"

37 "Salomski."

38 "pleased to meet cha, kid."

39 "likewise."

40 we went down the stairway
41 they were still in the lobby
42 looking at t.v.

43 "what did you think of him?"
44 my friend asked.

45 "shit," I said, "he was really
46 all right. yes."

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the place didn't look bad

1 she had huge thighs
2 and a very good laugh
3 she laughed at everything
4 and the curtains were yellow
5 and I finished
6 rolled off
7 and before she went to the bathroom
8 she reached under the bed and
9 threw me a rag.
10 it was hard
11 it was stiff with other men's
12 sperm.
13 I wiped off on the sheet.

14 when she came out
15 she bent over
16 and I saw all that behind
17 as she put Mozart
18 on.

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the little girls

1 up in northern California
2 he stood in the pulpit
3 and had been reading for some time
4 he had been reading poems about
5 nature and the goodness
6 of man.

7 he knew that everything was all
8 right and you couldn't blame him:
9 he was a professor and had never
10 been in jail or in a whorehouse
11 had never had a used car die
12 in a traffic jam;
13 had never needed more than
14 3 drinks during his wildest
15 evening;
16 had never been rolled, flogged,
17 mugged,
18 had never been bitten by a dog
19 he got nice letters from Gary
20 Snyder, and his face was
21 kindly, unmarked and

22 tender.
23 his wife had never betrayed him,
24 nor had his luck.

25 he said, "I'm just going to read
26 3 more poems and then I'm going
27 to step down and let
28 Bukowski read."

29 "oh no, William," said all the
30 little girls in their pink and blue
31 and white and orange and lavender
32 dresses, "oh no, William,

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33 read some more, read some
34 more!"

35 he read one more poem and then he said,
36 "this will be the last poem that
37 I will read."

38 "oh no, William," said all the little
39 girls in their red and green see-
40 through dresses, "oh no, William," said
41 all the little girls in their tight blue
42 jeans with little hearts sewn on them,
43 "oh no, William," said all the little girls,
44 "read more poems, read more poems!"

45 but he was good to his word.
46 he got the poem out and he climbed down and
47 vanished. as I got up to read
48 the little girls wiggled in
49 their seats and some of them hissed and
50 some of them made remarks to me
51 which I will use at some later date.

52 two or three weeks later
53 I got a letter from William
54 saying that he did enjoy my reading.
55 a true gentleman.
56 I was in bed in my underwear with a
57 3 day hangover. I lost the envelope
58 but I took the letter and folded it
59 into a paper airplane such as
60 I had learned to make in grammar
61 school. it sailed about the room
62 before landing between an old Racing Form
63 and a pair of shit-stained shorts.

64 we have not corresponded since.

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rain or shine

1 the vultures at the zoo
2 (all 3 of them)

3 sit very quietly in their
4 caged tree
5 and below
6 on the ground
7 are chunks of rotting meat.
8 the vultures are over-full.
9 our taxes have fed them
10 well.

11 we move on to the next
12 cage.
13 a man is in there
14 sitting on the ground
15 eating
16 his own shit.
17 I recognize him as
18 our former mailman.
19 his favorite expression
20 had been:
21 "have a beautiful day."

22 that day, I did.

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cold plums

1 eating cold plums in bed
2 she told me about the German
3 who owned everything on the block
4 except the custom drapery shop
5 and he tried to buy
6 the custom drapery shop
7 but the girls said, no.
8 the German had the best grocery store in
9 Pasadena, his meats were high
10 but worth the price
11 and his vegetables and produce were
12 very cheap and
13 he also sold flowers. people came
14 from all over Pasadena to go to his
15 store
16 but he wanted to buy the custom drapery shop
17 and the girls kept saying, no.
18 one night somebody was seen running
19 out the back door of the drapery shop
20 and there was a fire
21 and almost everything was destroyed---
22 they'd had a tremendous inventory,
23 they tried to save what was left
24 had a fire sale
25 but it didn't work
26 they had to sell, finally,
27 and then the German owned the drapery shop
28 but it just sits there, vacant,
29 the German's wife tried to make a go of it
30 she tried to sell little baskets and things
31 but it didn't work.

32 we finished the plums.

33 "that was a sad story," I told her.
34 then she bent down and began sucking me off.

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35 the windows were open and you could hear me
36 hollering all over the neighborhood
37 at 5:30 in the evening.

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girls coming home

1 the girls are coming home in their cars
2 and I sit by the window and
3 watch.

4 there's a girl in a red dress
5 driving a white car
6 there's a girl in a blue dress
7 driving a blue car
8 there's a girl in a pink dress
9 driving a red car.

10 as the girl in the red dress
11 gets out of the white car
12 I look at her legs

13 as the girl in the blue dress
14 gets out of the blue car
15 I look at her legs
16 as the girl in the pink dress
17 gets out of the red car
18 I look at her legs.

19 the girl in the red dress
20 who got out of the white car
21 had the best legs

22 the girl in the pink dress
23 who got out of the red car
24 had average legs

25 but I keep remembering the girl in the blue dress
26 who got out of the blue car

27 I saw her panties

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28 you don't know how exciting life can get
29 around here
30 at 5:35 p.m.

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some picnic

1 which reminds me
2 I shacked with Jane for 7 years

3 she was a drunk
4 I loved her

5 my parents hated her
6 I hated my parents
7 we made a nice
8 foursome

9 one day we went on a picnic
10 together
11 up in the hills
12 and we played cards and drank beer and
13 ate potato salad

14 they treated her as if she were a living person
15 at last

16 everybody laughed
17 I didn't laugh.

18 later at my place
19 over the whiskey
20 I said to her,
21 I don't like them
22 but it's good they treated you
23 nice.

24 you damn fool, she said,
25 don't you see?

26 see what?

27 they kept looking at my beer-belly,

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28 they think I'm pregnant.

29 oh, I said, well here's to our beautiful
30 child.

31 here's to our beautiful child,
32 she said.

33 we drank them down.

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bedpans

1 in the hospitals I've been in
2 you see the crosses on the walls
3 with the thin palm leaves behind them
4 yellowed and browned

5 it is the signal to accept the inevitable

6 but what really hurts
7 are the bedpans
8 hard under your ass

9 you're dying
10 and you're supposed to sit up on this
11 impossible thing
12 and urinate and
13 defecate

14 while in the bed
15 next to yours
16 a family of 5 brings good cheer
17 to an incurable
18 heart-case
19 cancer-case
20 or a case of general rot.

21 the bedpan is a merciless rock
22 a horrible mockery
23 because nobody wants to drag your failing body
24 to the crapper and back.

25 you'd drag it
26 but they've got the bars up:
27 you're in your crib
28 your tiny death-crib
29 and when the nurse comes back
30 an hour and a half later

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31 and there's nothing in the bedpan
32 she gives you a most
33 intemperate look

34 as if when nearing death
35 one should be able to do
36 the common common things
37 again and again.

38 but if you think that's bad
39 just relax
40 and let it go
41 all of it
42 into the sheets

43 then you'll hear it
44 not only from the nurse
45 but from
46 all the other patients ...

47 the hardest part of dying
48 is that they expect you
49 to go out
50 like a rocket shot into the
51 night sky.

52 sometimes that can be done

53 but when you need the bullet and the gun
54 you'll look up
55 and find
56 that the wires above your head

57 connected to the button
58 years ago
59 have been cut
60 snipped
61 eliminated
62 been

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63 made
64 useless as
65 the bedpan.

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the good loser

1 red face
2 Texas
3 and age
4 he's at an L.A.
5 racetrack
6 been talking to
7 a group of folks.
8 it's the 4th race
9 and he's ready to
10 leave:
11 "well, goodbye,
12 folks and God bless,
13 see you around
14 tomorrow ..."

15 "nice fellow."
16 "yeh."

17 he's going to the
18 parking lot to
19 get into a 12 year
20 old car

21 from there he'll
22 drive to a roominghouse

23 his room will neither
24 have a toilet nor a
25 bath

26 his room will have
27 one window with a
28 torn paper shade
29 and outside will be

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30 a crumbling cement wall
31 spray-can graffiti courtesy
32 of a Chicano youth gang

33 he'll take off his
34 shoes and

35 get on the bed
36 it will be dark
37 but he won't turn
38 on the light
39 he's got nothing
40 to do.

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an art

1 all the way from Mexico
2 straight from the fields
3 to 14 wins
4 13 by k.o.
5 he was ranked #3
6 and in a tune-up fight
7 he was k.o'd by an unranked
8 black fighter who hadn't fought
9 in 2 years.
10 all the way from Mexico
11 straight from the fields
12 the drink and the women had gotten
13 to him.
14 in the rematch he was k.o'd again
15 and suspended for 6 months.
16 all that way
17 for the bottle and 2 cases of
18 v.d.
19 he came back in a year
20 swearing he was clean, he'd
21 learned.
22 and he earned a draw with the
23 9th ranked in his division.
24 he came back for the rematch
25 and the fight was stopped in
26 the 3rd round because he
27 couldn't protect
28 himself.
29 and he went all the way back
30 to Mexico
31 straight to the fields.

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32 it takes a damned good poet
33 like me
34 to handle drink and women
35 evade v.d.
36 write about failures
37 like him
38 and hold my ranking in the
39 top 10:

40 all the way from Germany
41 straight from the factories
42 among beerbottles
43 and the ringing of the
44 phone.

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the girls at the green hotel

1 are more beautiful than
2 movie stars
3 and they lounge on the
4 lawn
5 sunbathing
6 and one sits in a short
7 dress and high
8 heels, legs crossed
9 exposing miraculous
10 thighs.
11 she has a bandanna
12 on her head
13 and smokes a
14 long cigarette.
15 traffic slows
16 almost stops.

17 the girls ignore
18 the traffic.
19 they are half
20 asleep in the afternoon
21 they are whores
22 they are whores without
23 souls
24 and they are magic
25 because they lie
26 about nothing.

27 I get in my car
28 wait for traffic to
29 clear,
30 drive across the street
31 to the green hotel
32 to my favorite:

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33 she is
34 sun-bathing on the
35 lawn nearest the
36 curb.

37 "hello," I say.
38 she turns eyes like
39 imitation diamonds
40 up at me.
41 her face has no
42 expression.

43 I drop my latest

44 book of poems
45 out the car
46 window.
47 it falls
48 by her side.

49 I shift into
50 low,
51 drive off.

52 there'll be some
53 laughs
54 tonight.

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a good one

1 I get too many
2 phone calls.
3 they seek the
4 creature out.
5 they shouldn't.

6 I never phoned
7 Knut Hamsun or
8 Ernie or
9 Celine.

10 I never phoned
11 Salinger
12 I never phoned
13 Neruda.

14 tonight I got
15 a call:

16 "hello. you
17 Charles Bukowski?"

18 "yes."

19 "well, I got a
20 house."

21 "yes?"

22 "a bordello."

23 "I understand."

24 "I've read your
25 books. I've got a

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26 houseboat in
27 Sausalito."

28 "all right."

29 "I want to give you
30 my phone number. you
31 ever come to San Francisco
32 I'll buy you a drink."

33 "o.k. give me the
34 number."

35 I took it down.

36 "we run a class joint. we're
37 after lawyers and state senators,
38 upper class citizens, muggers,
39 pimps, the like."

40 "I'll phone you when I
41 get up there."

42 "lots of the girls
43 read your books. they
44 love you."

45 "yeah?"
46 "yeah."

47 we said goodbye.

48 I liked that
49 phone call.

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shit time

1 half drunk
2 I left her place
3 her warm blankets
4 and I was hungover
5 didn't even know what town
6 it was.
7 I walked along and
8 I couldn't find my car.
9 but I knew it was somewhere.
10 and then I was lost
11 too.
12 I walked around. it was a
13 Wednesday morning and I could
14 see the ocean to the south.
15 but all that drinking:
16 the shit was about to pour
17 out of me.
18 I walked towards the
19 sea.
20 I saw a brown brick
21 structure at the edge
22 of the sea.
23 I walked in. there was an
24 old guy groaning on one of
25 the pots.

26 "hi, buddy," he said.
27 "hi," I said.
28 "it's hell out there,
29 isn't it?" the old guy
30 asked.
31 "it is," I answered.
32 "need a drink?"
33 "never before noon."
34 "what time you got?"
35 "11:58."
36 "we got two minutes."

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37 I wiped, flushed, pulled up my
38 pants and walked over.
39 the old man was still on his pot,
40 groaning.
41 he pointed to a bottle of wine
42 at his feet
43 it was almost done
44 and I picked it up and took about
45 half what remained.
46 I handed him a very old and wrinkled
47 dollar
48 then walked outside on the lawn
49 and puked it up.
50 I looked at the ocean and the
51 ocean looked good, full of blues and
52 greens and sharks.
53 I walked back out of there
54 and down the street
55 determined to find my automobile.
56 it took me one hour and 15 minutes
57 and when I found it
58 I got in and drove off
59 pretending that I knew just as much
60 as the next
61 man.

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madness

1 I don't beat the walls with my fists
2 I just sit
3 but it rushes in
4 a tide of it.

5 the woman in the court behind me howls,
6 weeps every night.
7 sometimes the county comes
8 and takes her away for a day or two.

9 I believed she was suffering the loss
10 of a great love
11 until one day she came over and told me about
12 it---
13 she had lost 8 apartment houses
14 to a gigolo who had swindled her out

15 of them.
16 she was howling and weeping over loss of property.
17 she began weeping as she told me
18 then with a mouth lined with stale lipstick
19 and smelling of garlic and onions
20 she kissed me and told me:
21 "Hank, nobody loves you if you don't have money."

22 she's old, almost as old as I am.

23 she left, still weeping ...

24 the other morning at 7:30 a.m. two black
25 attendants came with their stretcher,
26 only they knocked on my door.

27 "come on, man," said the tallest
28 one.

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29 "wait," I said, "there's a mistake."

30 I was terribly hungover
31 standing in my torn bathrobe
32 hair hanging down over my eyes.

33 "this is the address they gave us, man,
34 this is 5437 and 2/5's isn't it?"

35 "yes."

36 "come on, man, don't give us no shit."

37 "the lady you want is in the back there."

38 they both walked around back.

39 "this door here?"

40 "no, no, that's my back door. look go up those steps
behind
41 you there. it's the door to the east, the one with the
mailbox
42 hanging loose."

43 they went up and banged on the door. I watched them
take her
44 away. they didn't use the stretcher. she walked
between them.
45 and the thought occurred to me that they were taking
the wrong
46 one but I wasn't sure.

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a 56 year old poem

1 I went with two ladies
2 down to Venice

3 to look for antique furniture.
4 I parked in back of the store
5 and went in with them.
6 \$125 for a clock, \$700 for 6 chairs.
7 I stopped looking.

8 the ladies moved around
9 looking at everything.
10 the ladies had class.
11 I waved goodbye to one of the ladies
12 and walked out.

13 it was Sunday and the bar
14 wasn't much better,
15 everybody was nervous and young
16 and blonde and pale.
17 I finished my drink, got 4 beers
18 at the liquor store
19 and sat in my car drinking them.

20 finishing the 4th beer
21 the ladies came out.
22 they asked me if I was all right.
23 I told them that every experience
24 meant something
25 and that they had pulled me out of
26 my usual murky
27 current.

28 the one I knew best had bought a table
29 with a marble top for \$100.
30 she owned her own business and was a
31 civilized person.

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32 she was civilized enough to know a neighbor
33 who had a van
34 and while I sat in her apartment drinking
35 1974 Zeller Schwarze Katz
36 they went down and got the table.

37 later she wanted to know what I thought about
38 the table and I said I thought it was all right,
39 sometimes I lost one hundred dollars at the
40 racetrack. we watched tv in bed and later
41 that night I couldn't come. I think it was
42 because I was thinking about that marble table.
43 I'm sure it was. I don't have any antique marble
44 tables at my place, I almost never have any sex
trouble at
45 my place. sometimes but
46 very seldom.
47 I don't understand the whole antique
48 business

49 I'm sure it's a giant
50 con.

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the beautiful young girl walking past the graveyard---

1 I stop my car at the signal
2 I see her walking past the graveyard---

3 as she walks past the iron fence
4 I can see through the iron fence
5 and I see the headstones
6 and the green lawn.

7 her body moves in front of the iron fence
8 the headstones do not move.

9 I think,
10 doesn't anybody else see this?

11 I think,
12 does she see those headstones?

13 if she does
14 she has wisdom that I don't have
15 for she appears to ignore them.

16 her body moving in its
17 magic fluid
18 and her long hair is lighted
19 by the 3 p.m. sun.

20 the signal changes
21 she crosses the street to the west
22 I drive west.

23 I drive my car down to the ocean
24 get out
25 and run up and down
26 in front of the sea for 35 minutes

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27 seeing people here and there
28 with eyes and ears and toes
29 and various other parts.

30 nobody seems to care.

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beer

1 I don't know how many bottles of beer
2 I have consumed while waiting for things
3 to get better.
4 I don't know how much wine and whiskey
5 and beer
6 mostly beer
7 I have consumed after
8 splits with women---
9 waiting for the phone to ring
10 waiting for the sound of footsteps,

11 and the phone never rings
12 until much later
13 and the footsteps never arrive
14 until much later.
15 when my stomach is coming up
16 out of my mouth
17 they arrive as fresh as spring flowers:
18 "what the hell have you done to yourself?
19 it will be 3 days before you can fuck me!"

20 the female is durable
21 she lives seven and one half years longer
22 than the male, and she drinks very little beer
23 because she knows it's bad for the
24 figure.

25 while we are going mad
26 they are out
27 dancing and laughing
28 with horny cowboys.

29 well, there's beer
30 sacks and sacks of empty beer bottles
31 and when you pick one up
32 the bottles fall through the wet bottom

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33 of the paper sack
34 rolling
35 clanking
36 spilling grey wet ash
37 and stale beer,
38 or the sacks fall over at 4 a.m.
39 in the morning
40 making the only sound in your life.

41 beer
42 rivers and seas of beer
43 beer beer beer
44 the radio singing love songs
45 as the phone remains silent
46 and the walls stand
47 straight up and down
48 and beer is all there is.

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artist

1 all of a sudden I'm a painter.
2 a girl from Galveston gives me
3 \$50 for a painting of a man
4 holding a candycane while
5 floating in a darkened sky.

6 than a young man with a black beard
7 comes over
8 and I sell him three for \$80.
9 he likes rugged stuff

10 where I write across the painting---
11 "shoot shit" or "GRATE ART IS
12 HORSESHIT, BUY TACOS."

13 I can do a painting in 5 minutes.
14 I use acrylics, paint right out of
15 the tube.
16 I do the left side of the painting
17 first with my left hand and then
18 finish the right side with my
19 right hand.

20 now the man with the black beard
21 comes back with a friend whose hair
22 sticks out and they have a young blonde
23 girl with them.

24 black beard is still a sucker:
25 I sell him a hunk of shit---
26 an orange dog with the word
27 "DOG" written on his side.

28 stick-out hair wants 3 paintings
29 for which I ask \$70.
30 he doesn't have the money.

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31 I keep the paintings but
32 he promises to send me a
33 girl called Judy
34 in garter belt and high heels.
35 he's already told her about me:
36 "a world-renowned writer," he said
37 and she said, "oh no!" and pulled
38 her dress up over her head.
39 "I want that," I told him.

40 then we haggled over terms
41 I wanted to fuck her first
42 then get head later.
43 "how about head first and
44 fuck later?" he asked.

45 "that doesn't work," I
46 said.

47 so we agreed:
48 Judy will come by and
49 afterwards
50 I will hand her the
51 3 paintings.
52 so there we are:
53 back to the barter system,
54 the only way to beat
55 inflation.

56 never the less,
57 I'd like to
58 start the Men's Liberation Movement:

59 I want a woman to hand me 3 of her
60 paintings after I have
61 made love to her,
62 and if she can't paint
63 she can leave me
64 a couple of golden earrings
65 or maybe a slice of ear
66 in memory of one who
67 could.

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my old man

1 16 years old
2 during the depression
3 I'd come home drunk
4 and all my clothing---
5 shorts, shirts, stockings---
6 suitcase, and pages of
7 short stories
8 would be thrown out on the
9 front lawn and about the
10 street.

11 my mother would be
12 waiting behind a tree:
13 "Henry, Henry, don't
14 go in ... he'll
15 kill you, he's read
16 your stories ..."

17 "I can whip his
18 ass ..."

19 "Henry, please take
20 this ... and
21 find yourself a room."

22 but it worried him
23 that I might not
24 finish high school
25 so I'd be back
26 again.

27 one evening he walked in
28 with the pages of
29 one of my short stories
30 (which I had never submitted

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31 to him)
32 and he said, "this is
33 a great short story."
34 I said, "o.k.,"
35 and he handed it to me
36 and I read it.
37 it was a story about
38 a rich man

39 who had a fight with
40 his wife and had
41 gone out into the night
42 for a cup of coffee
43 and had observed
44 the waitress and the spoons
45 and forks and the
46 salt and pepper shakers
47 and the neon sign
48 in the window
49 and then had gone back
50 to his stable
51 to see and touch his
52 favorite horse
53 who then
54 kicked him in the head
55 and killed him.

56 somehow
57 the story held
58 meaning for him
59 though
60 when I had written it
61 I had no idea
62 of what I was
63 writing about.

64 so I told him,
65 "o.k., old man, you can
66 have it."

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67 and he took it
68 and walked out
69 and closed the door.
70 I guess that's
71 as close
72 as we ever got.

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fear

1 he walks up to my Volks
2 after I have parked
3 and rocks it back and
4 forth
5 grinning around his
6 cigar.

7 "hey, Hank, I notice
8 all the women around your
9 place lately ... good looking
10 stuff; you're doing all
11 right."

12 "Sam," I say, "that's not
13 true; I am one of God's most
14 lonely men."

15 "we got some nice girls at
16 the parlor, you oughta try
17 some of them."

18 "I'm afraid of those places,
19 Sam, I can't walk into them."

20 "I'll send you a girl then,
21 real nice stuff."

22 "Sam, don't send me a whore,
23 I always fall in love with
24 whores."

25 "o.k., friend," he says,
26 "let me know if you change
27 your mind."

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28 I watch him walk away.
29 some men are always on
30 top of their game.
31 I am mostly always
32 confused.

33 he can break a man
34 in half
35 and doesn't know who
36 Mozart is.

37 who wants to listen
38 to music
39 anyhow
40 on a rainy Wednesday
41 night?

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little tigers everywhere

1 Sam the whorehouse man
2 has squeaky shoes
3 and he walks up and down
4 the court
5 squeaking and talking to
6 the cats.
7 he's 310 pounds,
8 a killer
9 and he talks to the cats.
10 he sees the women at the massage
11 parlor and has no girlfriends
12 no automobile
13 he doesn't drink or dope
14 his biggest vices are
15 chewing on a cigar and
16 feeding all the cats in
17 the neighborhood.
18 some of the cats get

19 pregnant
20 and so finally there are
21 more and more cats and
22 everytime I open my door
23 one or two cats will
24 run in and sometimes I'll
25 forget they are there and
26 they'll shit under the bed
27 or I'll awaken at night
28 hearing sounds
29 leap up with my blade
30 sneak into the kitchen and
31 find one of Sam the whorehouse
32 man's cats walking around on
33 the sink or sitting on top
34 of the refrigerator.

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35 Sam runs the love parlor
36 around the corner
37 and his girls stand in the
38 doorway in the sun
39 and the traffic signals go
40 red and green and red and green
41 and all of Sam's cats
42 possess some of the meaning
43 as do the days and the nights.

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after the reading:

1 "... I've seen people in front of
2 their typewriters in such a bind
3 that it would blow their intestines
4 right out of their assholes if they
5 were trying to shit."
6 "ah hahaha hahaha!"
7 "... it's a shame to work that
8 hard to try to write."
9 "ah hahaha hahaha!"
10 "ambition rarely has anything to
11 do with talent. luck is best, and
12 talent limps along a little
13 bit behind luck."
14 "ah haha."
15 he rose and left with an 18 year old virgin, the most
16 beautiful co-ed of them
17 all.
18 I closed my notebook
19 got up and limped a
20 little bit behind
21 them.

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about cranes

1 sometimes after you get your ass
2 kicked real good by the forces

3 you often wish you were a crane
4 standing on one leg

5 in blue water

6 but there's
7 the
8 old up-bringing
9 you know:

10 you don't want to be
11 a crane
12 standing on one leg

13 in blue water

14 the distress is not
15 enough

16 and

17 the victory
18 limps

19 a crane can't
20 buy a piece of ass

21 or

22 hang itself at noon
23 in Monterey

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24 those are some of
25 the things

26 humans can do

27 besides
28 stand on one leg

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a gold pocket watch

1 my grandfather was a tall German
2 with a strange smell on his breath.
3 he stood very straight
4 in front of his small house
5 and his wife hated him
6 and his children thought him odd.

7 I was six the first time we met
8 and he gave me all his war medals.
9 the second time I met him
10 he gave me his gold pocket watch.
11 it was very heavy and I took it home
12 and wound it very tight
13 and it stopped running
14 which made me feel bad.
15 I never saw him again
16 and my parents never spoke of him
17 nor did my grandmother
18 who had long ago
19 stopped living with him.
20 once I asked about him
21 and they told me
22 he drank too much
23 but I liked him best
24 standing very straight
25 in front of his house
26 and saying, "hello, Henry, you
27 and I, we know each
28 other."

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beach trip

1 the strong men
2 the muscle men
3 there they sit
4 down at the beach
5 cocoa tans
6 with the weights
7 scattered about them
8 untouched

9 they sit as the
10 waves go in and
11 out

12 they sit as the
13 stock market
14 makes and breaks
15 men and families

16 they sit while
17 one punch of a button
18 could turn their
19 turkeynecks to
20 black and shriveled
21 matchsticks

22 they sit while
23 suicides in green rooms
24 trade it in for space

25 they sit while former
26 Miss Americas
27 weep before wrinkled
28 mirrors

29 they sit

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30 they sit with less
31 life-flow than apes
32 and my woman stops and
33 looks at them:
34 "oooh oooh oooh," she
35 says.

36 I walk off with
37 my woman as the waves
38 go in and out.

39 "there's something wrong
40 with them," she said, "what
41 is it?"

42 "their love only runs in
43 one direction."

44 the seagulls whirl and
45 the sea runs in and out

46 and we left them
47 back there
48 wasting themselves
49 time
50 this moment
51 the seagulls
52 the sea
53 the sand.

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 one for the shoeshine man

1 the balance is preserved by the snails climbing the
2 Santa Monica cliffs;
3 the luck is in walking down Western Avenue
4 and having the girls in a massage
5 parlor holler at you, "Hello, Sweetie!"
6 the miracle is having 5 women in love
7 with you at the age of 55,
8 and the goodness is that you are only able
9 to love one of them.
10 the gift is having a daughter more gentle
11 than you are, whose laughter is finer
12 than yours.
13 the peace comes from driving a
14 blue 67 Volks through the streets like a
15 teenager, radio tuned to The Host Who Loves You
16 Most, feeling the sun, feeling the solid hum
17 of the rebuilt motor
18 as you needle through traffic.
19 the grace is being able to like rock music,
20 symphony music, jazz ...
21 anything that contains the original energy of

22 joy.
23 and the probability that returns
24 is the deep blue low
25 yourself flat upon yourself
26 within the guillotine walls
27 angry at the sound of the phone
28 or anybody's footsteps passing;
29 but the other probability---
30 the lilting high that always follows---
31 makes the girl at the checkstand in the
32 supermarket look like
33 Marilyn
34 like Jackie before they got her Harvard lover

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35 like the girl in high school that we
36 all followed home.
37 there is that which helps you believe
38 in something else besides death:
39 somebody in a car approaching
40 on a street too narrow,
41 and he or she pulls aside to let you
42 by, or the old fighter Beau Jack
43 shining shoes
44 after blowing the entire bankroll
45 on parties
46 on women
47 on parasites,
48 humming, breathing on the leather,
49 working the rag
50 looking up and saying:
51 "what the hell, I had it for a
52 while. that beats the
53 other."
54 I am bitter sometimes
55 but the taste has often been
56 sweet. it's only that I've
57 feared to say it. it's like
58 when your woman says,
59 "tell me you love me," and
60 you can't.
61 if you see me grinning from
62 my blue Volks
63 running a yellow light
64 driving straight into the sun
65 I will be locked in the
66 arms of a
67 crazy life
68 thinking of trapeze artists
69 of midgets with big cigars
70 of a Russian winter in the early 40's
71 of Chopin with his bag of Polish soil

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72 of an old waitress bringing me an extra
73 cup of coffee and laughing
74 as she does so.

75 the best of you
76 I like more than you think.
77 the others don't count
78 except that they have fingers and heads
79 and some of them eyes
80 and most of them legs
81 and all of them
82 good and bad dreams
83 and a way to go.

84 justice is everywhere and it's working
85 and the machine guns and the frogs
86 and the hedges will tell you
87 so.

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